

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



William Roxby Beverley (Richmond 1811 - Hampstead 1889)

Fishing Boats on a Beach

Watercolour over a pencil underdrawing.

Signed and dated W.Beverley [?] Augt. / 28 1835 at the lower right.

258 x 358 mm. (10 1/8 x 14 1/8 in.)

An early work by the artist, this large sheet is a fine example of William Roxby Beverley's lively watercolour sketches. In one of the first critical reappraisals of the artist's work, published in 1921, Frank Emanuel noted of Beverley that 'there are numbers of charming little compositions and studies of boats and shipping, of which he had the completest practical knowledge, down to the smallest detail.

Indeed, his knowledge of shipping was equal to that of any of the specialists in marine work...His drawing of the subtly curving lines of hulls, his delineation of spars and rigging, is absolutely faultless, and put in with a line unrivalled for certainty and purity.' The scene depicted here is likely to be found in one of the fishing communities in the North East of England, where the artist made several sketching tours.

Provenance:

Michael Ingram, Driffeld Manor, Driffeld, Gloucestershire
His posthumous sale, London, Sotheby's, 6 June 2007, part of lot 248
Private collection, England, until 2010.

Artist description:

The son and grandson of actors and theatre managers, William Roxby Beverley began his career as a painter of scenery for the theatre, and continued to work in this field throughout his life. Indeed, his reputation was established by his renown as a scene painter, and in particular his skill in rendering atmospheric effects. (An obituary published in the Daily Telegraph in 1889 described Beverley as the 'long acknowledged chief and doyen of English scenic artists', although the author also noted his 'noble water-colours done in leisure hours.') Beverley began to produce landscape watercolours under the

influence of Clarkson Stanfield, also a former scene painter whom he joined on sketching tours, as well as Richard Parkes Bonington. Although Beverley began exhibiting his marine watercolours from 1831 onwards, he continued to make his living as both a scene painter and, occasionally, as an actor. By 1846 he had settled in London, and was engaged as scenic director at several theatres, notably at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. By comparison with many of his fellow artists, however, Beverley produced relatively few watercolours, as he was kept busy by the demands on his time as a theatrical painter and scenographer. Nevertheless, as one early critic had noted, 'Beverley painted water-colour pictures of rare and delicate beauty, works which alone should suffice to win for him a place in the front rank among our masters of water-colour art.'

Beverley worked for his entire career in England and Scotland, although he is known to have visited France and Switzerland. He was particularly fond of coastal scenes and depictions of such port towns and fishing communities as Scarborough, Eastbourne, Hastings and Sunderland, and also painted views in London and the Lake District. In many of his watercolours, there is a particular interest in skies and atmospheric effects; a legacy of his training as a scene painter. Beverley regularly exhibited his landscape watercolours, almost always of English coastal scenes, at the Royal Academy between 1865 and 1880. He also showed his work at commercial galleries such as the Dudley Gallery, and is said to have charged up to £400 for some of his finished watercolours.