

JEAN-BAPTISTE HUET

(Paris 1745 - Paris 1811)

A Shepherd and a Shepherdess Resting

watercolour on traces of black and sanguine chalk
19 x 24.5 cm (8 ½ x 9 ¾ in)

Provenance: Albuquerque, his stamp (lower right)

IN THIS CHARMING DRAWING, A YOUNG SHEPHERD reclines elegantly upon the lap of a young shepherdess, who appears to be about to place a garland of pink roses upon his head. She smiles at a small dog who regards her eagerly, his forepaws resting on her lap. The pretty couple have cheeks as pink as the roses, and seem to be barely more than children. A basket of roses is set beside them, while a few sheep lie placidly about. This happy gathering rests in a clearing before a tree and a stone ruin. The artist's use of rubbing to the background creates a bluish, hazy effect, suggesting the depth of the woods.

A Shepherd and a Shepherdess Resting is an example of the pastoral genre in the *petite manière*, in which a shepherd and shepherdess are presented as lovers, a genre popularised by Jean-Baptiste Huet's contemporary, the great Rococo artist François Boucher (1703-1770) (see catalogue no. 114). These pastorals were inspired by comic operas produced for the Théâtre de la Foire by Boucher's friend, Charles-Simon Favart (1710-1792). In our present pastoral, the young couple act out a scene of pastoral love in embellished costumes, in the spirit of Boucher. Huet also treated the pastoral theme in the medium of the print, creating such lyrical and dreamy scenes as *Shepherdess with Flock*, in which a lone shepherdess, seated by a ruined arch, appears lost in a reverie (fig.1).

Huet, both painter and engraver, trained with his father, Nicolas Huet, before being apprenticed to Charles Dagomer (fl.1762-1764), the animal painter. It was at this time that he began making prints and became acquainted with the print maker Gilles Demarteau (1722-1776), who subsequently made coloured chalk-manner engravings of Huet's and Boucher's works, replicating the effect of their drawings in chalks. It has been established that Huet collaborated with Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806) (see catalogue no. 96) on a decorative scheme for

¹ J. Wilhelm: 'Le Salon du graveur Gilles Demarteau peint par Francois Boucher et son atelier avec le concours de Fragonard et de Jean-Baptiste Huet', *Bull. Mus. Carnavalet*, I (1975), pp. 6-20.



Jean-Baptiste Huet, *Shepherdess with Flock*, etching,
Harvard Art Museum / Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Figure 1)

Demarteau's house in Paris (Carnavalet, Paris).¹

At the age of nineteen, Huet entered the studio of Jean-Baptiste Le Prince (1734-1781) (see inventory), who had trained with François Boucher. He was *agrée* (approved) by the Académie Royale, and in 1769 he was *reçu* (received) as an animal painter. He first exhibited paintings at the Salon in 1769, his *morceau de réception* (reception piece), *Fox in the Chicken Run*, being one of his most important works. When the French Revolution broke out in 1789, Huet became captain of the town militia at Sèvres, where he owned a country residence. He exhibited twice more at the Salon in 1800 and 1801, ten years before his death.



(Actual Size)