

Jean-Baptiste-Camille COROT (Paris 1796 - Ville d'Avray 1875)

A Village Church

Pencil, with framing lines in pencil.
Stamped with the vente stamp (Lugt 460a) at the lower right.
182 x 113 mm. (7 1/8 x 4 3/8 in.)

This pencil study of a small village church, like many of his drawings, is unrelated to any painting by Corot. It may be dated on stylistic grounds to the 1830's or early 1840's, a period when the artist was particularly interested in the study of architecture. (This may reflect the influence of the painter and architect Pierre-Achille Poirot, whom Corot had met in Italy and with whom he travelled to Chartres and Normandy in the summer of 1830.) Corot produced a number of stylistically comparable pencil drawings of churches during this period, although most are of much grander buildings, such a study of Chartres Cathedral in the Louvre, which was used for a painting of 1830, and a drawing of The Apse of a Church in Caen of 1830, also in the Louvre.

This drawing was included in the posthumous sale of the contents of Corot's studio in 1875. It is then recorded in the collection of Dr. Georges Viau (1855-1939), a successful dentist and a prominent collector of 19th and early 20th century French art who owned several paintings by Corot. The drawing was later acquired for the outstanding collection of drawings assembled by the German banker Franz Koenigs (1881-1941), who settled in the Netherlands in 1922. One of the foremost drawings collectors of the first half of the 20th century, Koenigs owned some 2,600 Old Master and 19th century drawings, for the most part acquired in the 1920's and early 1930's. Much of the Koenigs collection is today in the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam, while around three hundred drawings from the

collection are in the Pushkin State Museum in Moscow. However, Koenigs retained a smaller group of drawings, including the present sheet, in a 'Second Collection' that remained with his descendants until 2001.

The attribution of the present sheet to Corot has been confirmed by Martin Dieterle, and will be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Corot's drawings.

Provenance:

The vente Corot, Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 26 May 1875 onwards
Dr. Georges Viau, Paris
Paul Cassirer, Amsterdam, in 1938
Franz Koenigs, Haarlem
By descent to Mr. and Mrs. van der Waals-Koenigs, Heemstede, by 1964
Thence by descent in the Koenigs family until 2001
Koenigs sale, New York, Sotheby's, 23 January 2001, lot 43
Private collection, Florida, until 2012.

Exhibitions

Amsterdam, Paul Cassirer & Co., Fransche Meesters uit de XIXe eeuw: Teekeningen, Aquarellen, Pastels, July-August 1938, no.33.

Artist description:

Although Camille Corot's drawings received relatively little critical attention in his lifetime, the artist laid great store by them, once noting that 'Le dessin est la confidence de l'artiste' ('Drawing is the artist's intimate side') and claiming that he drew every evening. He is also known to have said that 'To my mind the two things of most importance are to make a concentrated study of the drawing and the values.'1 Around a thousand drawings by Corot are known today, ranging from rapid working sketches to large, atmospheric landscape drawings. While many more drawings must have been lost, a large number were preserved by the Corot scholars Alfred Robaut and Etienne Moreau-Nélaton and are today in the Louvre.

As Peter Galassi has noted, 'The range and versatility of Corot's drawings is a sign of their function. For Corot the drawing was never an end in itself; it was part of a continuous process of experiment and revision. This was true even when a series of drawings did not lead to the implied climax of an oil study.' Corot's early drawings are characterized by a spare, precise linearity, restrained landscape compositions and the use of a fine pen or a sharp lead pencil. (As the artist later recalled, 'In those days I had wonderful pencils! They never broke; they were more likely to tear the paper.') Around 1850, however, Corot began to prefer charcoal and chalk for his drawings, creating greater tonal effects in his landscape studies, which are darker and more atmospheric.