Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Achille-Etna MICHALLON (Paris 1796 - Paris 1822)

A Procession of Monks in the Countryside near Naples

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, over a pencil underdrawing.

Signed and dated Michallon / 1822 at the lower right.

Further inscribed Michallon 1822 on the mount.

192 x 272 mm. (7 5/8 x 10 3/4 in.) [sight]

As has been noted of the artist, 'Michallon drew a small number of imaginary landscapes in the historical, idealized vein, but the majority of his output was devoted to studies after the motif, made from direct observation. These sheets include some drafted in a clean, simple, and illustrative style; others are more richly evoked, exploring the range of effects generated by chalk or ink.'

Drawn in the year of the artist's early death, after he had left Italy and returned to France, this atmospheric landscape should be seen as a souvenir of Italy, rather than a strictly topographical view. A stylistically comparable pen and wash drawing – a depiction of The Tomb of Virgil in Naples, signed and dated 1822 - is in the Louvre, while likewise similar in technique, size and date is a landscape drawing of Peasants Gathering Fruit near Naples, also dated 1822, in a private American collection. Also similar is a landscape with the town of Isola del Liri, likewise dated 1822, in the collection of the Albertina in Vienna.

The present sheet is likely to have been among the contents of the artist's studio dispersed in the posthumous vente Michallon of December 1822. It later entered the collection of the Rouen merchant and archaeologist Louis Deglatigny (1854-1936), who assembled an extensive collection of paintings and drawings, as well as books and prints, much of which was sold in five auctions in Paris in 1937. This drawing, however, remained with the collector's descendants until 2019.

Artist description:

The son of the sculptor Claude Michallon, Achille-Etna Michallon was orphaned at an early age. A precocious and gifted artist, he received his training with Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, Jean-Victor

Bertin, Alexandre-Hyacinthe Dunuoy and Jacques-Louis David. (He also seems to have studied Alphonse Mandevare's Principes raisonnés du paysage, a practical guide to the landscape drawing published in 1804.) Michallon first exhibited at the Salon in 1812, at the age of fifteen, exhibiting two paintings and receiving a second-class medal. Among his earliest works were a series of landscape illustrations for accounts of exotic voyages, notably Le voyage d'Ali Bey en Abassi en Afrique et en Asie pendant les années 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806 et 1807, published in Paris in 1814. Three years later, in 1817, Michallon won the inaugural Prix de Rome in the newly established category of the 'paysage historique', or historical landscape painting, created for him the previous year by the Count de Vaublanc, Minister of the Interior.

Michallon was a pensionnaire in Rome between 1818 and 1821, and the landscape paintings he sent to the Salons from Italy were well received by critics, many of whom regarded him as the most promising young landscape painter of his generation. During his return trip to France in 1821 Michallon made drawings of picturesque towns in Italy and Switzerland, and soon after his arrival in Paris opened a teaching studio. Among his pupils was the young Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, who was of the same age, and who studied with him for a brief period until Michallon's early death from pneumonia in September 1822, a month shy of his twenty-sixth birthday. A sale of the contents of the painter's studio, held a few weeks after his death, included some four hundred paintings and oil sketches, as well as around seven hundred drawings and nineteen sketchbooks. In 1994 an exhibition devoted to Michallon was mounted at the Louvre, which today houses the largest extant collection of the artist's drawings.