

Carl HUMMEL (Weimar 1821 - Weimar 1907)

View over the South Coast of Capri, Looking towards Monte Solaro

Watercolour, laid down on board.

Signed C Hummel at the lower left.

426 x 336 mm. (16 3/4 x 13 1/4 in.)

Datable to between 1842 and 1846, when Carl Hummel travelled throughout Italy, this fine watercolour depicts part of the southern coast of the island of Capri. In the foreground is a rocky outcrop with the castle-like Villa Castiglione at its summit, while behind rises Monte Solaro, the highest point on the island at 589 metres above sea level. In the valley between the mountains can be seen the winding paved footpath known as the Via Krupp, leading down to the small fishing village of Marina Piccola.

At the time of Hummel's visit to Capri, set in the Tyrrhenian Sea, the island was beginning to be discovered by foreign artists. As one modern scholar has noted, 'Capri had become popular in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when rugged nature alone, rather than landscapes with ruins or landscapes with allusions to past art became, for the first time, desirable subjects for the artist's brush...The island, though an established part of the tourist route by the 1850s, was not easily reached even a decade later...Capri also lacked the amenities desired by most tourists. It had just one hotel; the local population of 5,000 were all either farmers or fisherfolk; and for transportation around the island, a donkey was recommended.' By the last quarter of the 19th century, howver, there was a thriving community of European and American artists living and working on the island.

The appeal of Capri to artists is evident in a description of the island's scenery by another German

visitor, writing in c.1853: ‘Nature here guards against monotonous bareness by beauty of line and form; against deadness, by warmth of color; against dryness, by scattered greenness and the ornament of flowering plants. And so she combines all these peculiar features, - bare wastes, ruins, sharp peaks, all forms of monotony and nakedness in miniature, - and of the whole forms an enchanting picture… Mountains, cliffs, and valleys affect the mind as if by a secret charm; they form, as it were, the cell of a recluse, through the lattice of which is seen the most beautiful bay in the world; and this is again held embraced by silent, dreamy shores, and so it is, in truth, a magic ring by which you are encircled.’

A large pencil drawing by Hummel of a view near the town of Anacapri, signed and dated 1876, appeared at auction in Germany in 2013.

Artist description:

The son of the Austrian composer and conductor Johann Nepomuk Hummel and the opera singer Elisabeth Röckel, the landscape painter Carl Maria Nicolaus Hummel studied under Friedrich Preller the Elder at the Royal Free Drawing School in Weimar, from the age of twelve until he turned twenty. He spent several years travelling and making sketching tours of England, Norway, the Tyrol, sometimes with Preller, and the two artists remained lifelong friends. Between 1842 and 1844 Hummel was in Italy, spending long periods in Rome, Capri and Sicily. Following his marriage in 1845 he returned to Italy and Switzerland, but by the following year had settled in his native city of Weimar. There, in 1860, he was appointed a professor at the newly-established Grand-Ducal Saxon Art School, and from this time onwards he travelled mainly in Germany. Most of Hummel’s paintings are of Tyrolean and Italian views, and a retrospective exhibition of his work was held at the Castle Museum in Weimar in 1905, two years before his death. Much of the contents of Hummel’s studio remained with his descendants in Weimar until 1993.