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JEAN-BAPTISTE-CAMILLE COROT 1796 - 1875

Campagne Romaine – Vallée rocheuse avec un troupeau de porcs 1843

oil on canvas:

28.5 x 45 cm

signed lower left: **COROT 1843**

Painted 1827-28 and retouched 1843

Provenance:

anon. sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 12 May 1896, no. 32

unknown, France

Christie's, New York, 1 May 2000, lot 202

private collection, London

Literature :

Robault, A. [ed.], *L'oeuvre de Corot, catalogue raisonné et illustré*, Floury, Paris, 1965, volume II, pp. 92, no. 259. illus.

Dieterle, M., *J.-B.-C. Corot Catalogue Raisonné*, forthcoming supplement.

From his arrival in 1826 until he left in 1828, Corot traveled widely in the Roman campagna making drawings and plein-air oil sketches. Little is known of his precise itineraries, although

the lack of any record in much of 1827-28 from his fellow artists living there would suggest he had traveled beyond Rome for an extended period. The Italian climate and topography immediately appealed to Corot and the views and studies he produced during his Roman travels often echo the description by Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes: 'The warmth of the climate [...] endows all the vegetation with a vigorous character not found in Northern countries; the soil has a warmer color, the rocks stand out more forcefully, the greens there are darker and more varied, the skies bluer and the clouds more colorful'¹ Corot wrote home of being awoken every morning 'by a blaze of sunlight that strikes the wall of my room. In short the weather is always beautiful. On the other hand, I find this brilliant sunlight dispiriting. I feel the complete impotence of my palette'.²

This small view was probably painted on the occasion of an outing in the vicinity of Narni, or possibly Orte, where Corot painted several views at this time. It was on these journeys into the Campagna that the artist evolved one of his most important contributions to the technique of landscape painting, by avoiding a detailed examination and instead presenting the foreground through painted analysis of the light and color values. The artist understood that an observer of a distant view did not see what was actually at his feet, as the young Théodore Rousseau observed in 1830. This is particularly evident the present work with the sketchy foreground contrasting with the more carefully articulated distant view across the river curling towards a distant hill-top village. The painting was almost certainly one of the several oil sketches made on canvas at this time, but unlike those which remained in his studio (and were subsequently included in the studio *Vente*), he came back to this work at the time of his third Roman trip, in order to complete the painting for the market. A technical examination of the work suggests that the artist completed the tree on the right-side of the copse at left, and also worked-up the sky to its present, more finished appearance.

The Matthiesen Gallery, London

¹ See Peter Galassi, *Corot in Italy*, New Haven and London, 1991, p. 90.

² Letter dated March 1826 in Moreau-Nélaton, *Corot raconté par lui même*. See also Galassi, *op. cit.*, p. 134.