

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



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GASPAR VAN WITTEL, CALLED GASPARE VANVITELLI

1652/53 Amersfoort - Rome 1736

*View of Castel Gandolfo and Lake Albano*

Black chalk, pen and brown ink, grey wash on three sheets of paper; made up.  
Bearing the inscriptions *Castel / Gandolfo* and *G. Van Vitelli* (on a fragment of paper attached to the verso).  
295 x 944 mm

PROVENANCE: Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (sculptor; 1716-99), Rome – Vincenzo Pacetti (sculptor; 1746-1820), Rome (acquired from the above in 1801)<sup>1</sup> – Paul Fatio, Geneva – Edmond Fatio, Geneva (bears his mark, not listed in Lugt); [his sale: *Dessins anciens et modernes*, Geneva, Nicolas Rauch S.A., 13-15 June 1960, lot 390]

LITERATURE: *The Italian Scene. Drawings by Vanvitelli*, exhib. cat., Agnew & Sons, London 1961, no. 7. – *Vanvitelli ed altri vedutisti*, exhib. cat, Galeria Gasparini, Rome 1966, no. 32 – A. Zwollo, *Hollandse een Vlaamse veduteschilders te Rome 1675-1725*, Assen 1973, p.122, note 243 – Giuliano Briganti, *Caspar Van Wittel e l'origine della veduta settecentesca*, Rome 1966, p.274, no. 22d – Giuliano Briganti, *Caspar van Wittel*, Milan 1996, no. D 130, repr. p.334

The Dutch painter and draughtsman Gaspar van Wittel trained in Amersfoort in his early years. In 1675 he travelled to Italy, where he italianized his name, calling himself Gaspare Vanvitelli, and spent almost the whole of the rest of his life in Rome. His rare excursions from the city were restricted to visits to northern Italy in the early 1690s and to Naples in 1700-1.

Van Wittel developed into one of the principal contemporary painters of topographical views. His *vedute* are precursors of 18th-century style. That is to say, they are realistic views structured according to rational principles of vision. They combine precise description of the subject with a strict adherence to panoramic perspective. Van Wittel was also innovative in his choice of motif, avoiding the conventional scenes – architectural ruins overrun by vegetation – that had attracted his predecessors.

The only existing account of his life was penned by the Perugian biographer Linone Pascoli probably around 1730. As Pascoli writes: *It can be said without any suspicion of adulation and error that he (Gaspar) was quite unique in so exactly and consummately representing with his brush places and views of every description just as they had been created in life. The profound understanding he had of perspective, architecture and optics, the rules of which he always applied in his work, combined with his excellent taste and wise discernment, enables us clearly to perceive his greatness of mind.*<sup>2</sup> In his later career he concentrated on using the drawings he had made in Rome in the 1680s and on his occasional travels as models for paintings. Many of these sheets, which were drawn from life (*naar het leven*) and completed in the studio, are extant. The most important drawings are preserved in the Museo Nazionale di San Martino in Naples,<sup>3</sup> in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Rome and in the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in Munich.<sup>4</sup> They were often executed on several sheets of joined paper, as is the present drawing.

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The drawing depicts a view of Castel Gandolfo as seen from the north. Lake Albano is shown on the left and the plain extending towards the Mediterranean on the right. The small hill depicted on the right between the trees is Monte Savello, crowned at the time by a castle. The path following the ridge of the caldera is lined with single clumps of trees. In the nineteenth century this path was lined by ancient oaks and served as a popular subject for the group of foreign artists working in Rome.<sup>5</sup> It was known as 'the gallery'.

<sup>1</sup> Most of the van Wittel drawings in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin were formerly in the Pacetti Collection.

<sup>2</sup> L. Pascoli, *Vite di pittori, scultori ed architetti viventi*, from MSS 1383 and 1743, Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, Perugia (biography of G. van Wittel, ed. G. Briganti), Treviso 1981. English translation: Laura Laureati in *Vanvitelli*, exhib. cat., Robilant & Voena, London 2008, p.9.

<sup>3</sup> *Walter Vitzthum (ed.), Caspar van Wittel (1652/53-1736), Disegni dalle Collezioni Napoletane*, exhib. cat., Gaeta 1980.

<sup>4</sup> *Gaspare Vanvitelli (1652/53-1736), Zeichnungen und Aquarelle*, exhib. cat., Neue Pinakothek, Munich 1983.

<sup>5</sup> See no. 17 of the present catalogue, the pencil drawing by Ernst Fries titled *View of Castel Gandolfo*.