

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



JAKOB PHILIPP HACKERT  
1737 Prenzlau - Florence 1807

*A Pine near Genzano*

Black chalk, heightened with white, on light brown paper.

Signed and dated lower left: *J. Philipp Hackert f. 1769 in Genzano*. Annotated on the verso (by another hand): *Charlotte Clive / Bought at Naples of Mr Hacket / 19 March 1787*.

542 x 401 mm

PROVENANCE: Charlotte Clive (1762-95, daughter of Robert Clive, 1st Baron Clive, known as *Clive of India*), acquired directly from the artist in Naples in 1787 – Edward Clive, 1st Earl of Powis, Powis Castle, Welshpool – Abbot & Holder, London (1968) – Private collection, England

Jakob Philipp Hackert arrived in Rome in December 1768. He immediately started out to explore the landscapes of the surrounding countryside. He set off on foot to the Alban Hills accompanied by the Swedish sculptor Johan Tobias Sergel (1740-1814) and the French painter Antoine François Callet (1741-1823) in the spring of 1769. Goethe in his biographical comments on Hackert notes: *In the company of these two artists they [sic!] also undertook a short journey to Frascati, Grotta Ferrata, Marino, Albano, Nemi and so forth in the spring, to first acquaint themselves in a general way with the beauties of nature in these places.*<sup>1</sup>

Mediterranean varieties of indigenous tree previously unknown to him almost certainly excited Hackert's interest on this first journey on foot. Documents show that he had begun to make drawings of trees from nature while he was still in Berlin. In Italy, he would develop this speciality, the 'tree portrait'. Goethe, who had first met Hackert in Caserta in 1787, notes some time later: *His pencil drawings of trees and groups of trees [...] were always executed in such a manner that, should a lover of drawings so wish, they could always be transformed using bistre into gradations of light, shadowy, middle and local tones, and then firmly laid down and enclosed in a greenish frame, thus transposing them into objects of a certain pecuniary value.*<sup>2</sup> A comment by an unknown author published in an article after Hackert's death reads: *Among other things, he was very accomplished in portraying the characteristics of a tree; it therefore displeased him greatly when one was unable to identify every single tree in his paintings at first viewing.*<sup>3</sup>

Botanical study was an indispensable prerequisite for an artist so preoccupied with trees and Hackert pursued his studies in this area with something approaching scientific rigour. He devised his own system for distinguishing different varieties of tree by the shape and structure of their foliage. He presented this in a treatise titled *Traktat zur Landschaftsmalerei* published in the second half of the 1790s. In the treatise he advised young artists to devote generous amounts of time to the study of trees.

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<sup>1</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Werke*, xlvii (*Winckelmann/Philipp Hackert*), Weimar 1891, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Werke*, xlviii (*Schriften zur Kunst/Paralipomena*), Weimar 1897, p. 251.

<sup>3</sup> See anonymous, *Fragmente über Jacob Philipp Hackert als Mensch und als Künstler*, in *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, 25 August 1807, p. 810.

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The present drawing depicts a tall pine tree (*pinus pinea*), its crown rising above a dense but graceful network of branches. The trunk is slender and gently arched. This variety of trees is indigenous to the northern Mediterranean. It can reach a height of 30 metres and an age of 250 years. These pines are distinctive features of the cityscape of Rome and they are found all over Latium. Hackert probably first saw one in Rome. Another of his drawings, also executed in 1769, depicts two pines in the park of the Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome [fig. 1].

Hackert's topographical inscription states that our drawing was executed near the village of Genzano. The village lies on higher ground overlooking Lake Nemi. The annotation is an indication to the viewer that Hackert's drawings serve more than one purpose and are to be interpreted as a form of landscape documentation: although a solitary tree may have been singled out as a pictorial motif for its aesthetic qualities, it also functions as something of a landmark – a landmark making it possible for the viewer to identify Hackert's viewpoint. The woman and small boy in the drawing fulfil a double function – first, to register a scale against which the size of the tree can be measured, and second, to suggest to the viewer that the landscape segment depicted is merely a very small part of something greater which extends beyond the limits of the sheet.

Hackert has selected a sheet of light brown paper. He has delineated the tree in black chalk and added heightening in white. His choice of tinted paper lends the drawing a very special status both within the corpus of drawings he executed in his early years in Rome and in the context of his entire *oeuvre*. In all probability this is the only occasion on which Hackert used a tinted ground for one of his drawings. Then a young man at the start of his career, he was evidently eager to experiment with a variety of different drawing techniques.

The present 'tree portrait' was clearly executed directly before the motif and in one sitting. The spontaneity of the handling shares certain similarities with three other drawings made in the same year.<sup>4</sup> Common to these 'tree portraits' is the spontaneity of execution and the concentration on effects of light. These are entirely characteristic of Hackert's work in his first year in Italy. In our drawing Hackert successfully melds a meticulous portrayal of a single tree in all its botanical detail with an evocative depiction of a heat-drenched Mediterranean landscape at noon. The light brown paper seems to reflect the heat of the Italian sun – a heat which is almost palpable. Light emerging from the left models the rough bark of the pine and accentuates individual clumps of pine needles. The relentless heat sends the viewer in search of shade.

It is not unreasonable to conjecture that Hackert valued the drawing very highly, since he was to keep it in his possession for the following eighteen years. The sheet did not change hands until 1787 when it was sold to Charlotte Clive, as the inscription on the verso states. Charlotte arrived in Rome with her brother Edward, 2nd Baron Clive (1754-1839),<sup>5</sup> in February 1787. The pair only stayed in the

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<sup>4</sup> *Oaks near Albano*, pen, brush in grey and brown, 378 x 477 mm. Private collection. Here too, Hackert's interest focuses on the fall of sunlight on the foliage. He has modelled this with rapid, fluent brushstrokes. *Chestnut Tree near Licenza*, pen and brush in brown, 504 x 392 mm. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. (See Nordhoff and Reimer 1994, II, no. 607). This drawing can be compared to a drawing of a similar motif which was probably also executed in 1769: *Chestnut Tree on High Ground*, brush and brown ink over pencil, 455 x 340 mm. Private collection.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Clive married Henrietta Antonia Herbert (1758-1830), daughter of the 1st Earl of Powis, in 1784. On the death of her elder brother the title became extinct but it was revived in 1804 and transferred to Clive. From then on he was titled 1st Earl of Powis. For biographical details on Edward Clive and his sister Charlotte, see John Ingamells, *A dictionary of British*

city for two months. They set off on their return to England on 22 April. Nonetheless, they still found time for a visit to Angelika Kauffmann (1741-1807) to sit for their portraits in April.<sup>6</sup> Charlotte also sat for Charles Grignion (1754-1804), who depicted her in a Campagna landscape, her left hand resting on a drawing portfolio that may well have contained her own sketches.<sup>7</sup> [fig. 2] In March, the Clives interrupted their stay in Rome for a short trip to Naples. Here, they visited Hackert, who was active as the court painter to Ferdinand IV of Naples. Hackert sold Edward Clive a painting depicting a rocky landscape near Vietri sul Mare.<sup>8</sup> However, on 19 March 1787 Charlotte chose to buy the present drawing. She probably found *A Pine near Genzano* a fitting memento of her brief visit to Italy. Charlotte Clive died unmarried at the age of thirty-three and it is probable that the present drawing entered her brother's collection on her death.

*A Pine near Genzano* represents a valuable addition to Jakob Philipp Hackert's corpus of recorded drawings. It reveals to what levels of skill his mastery in the depiction of trees had advanced by 1769, the first year of his sojourn in Rome. The use of light brown tinted paper makes it unique. In addition, it is of extraordinary art-historical interest, given its distinguished provenance – a provenance that can be traced back to Hackert himself. The work is of outstanding importance in Hackert's *oeuvre*.

We would like to thank Dr. Claudia Nordhoff for her support in preparing this catalogue entry. Her complete expertise is available upon request.



Fig. 1: *Pines in the Park of the Villa Doria Pamphili*  
pen, brush in brown over pencil, 380 x 305 mm  
Private collection; with Galleria Apolloni, Rome (1999)



Fig. 2: Charles Grignion, *Portrait of Charlotte Clive*  
oil on canvas, 134 x 101.6 cm  
Powis Castle, The Powis Collection  
(The National Trust)

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and Irish travellers in Italy 1701-1800. *Comp. from the Brinsley Ford Archive by John Ingamells*. New Haven and London 1997, pp. 220-1. Ingamells was not aware of the Clives' visit to Naples in March 1787.

<sup>6</sup> Kauffmann notes in her *memoria delle piture* [sic!] in April 1787 two portraits *per Lord Clive Inglese – per Ladi Clive sorela dell sudetto*, each of which cost 100 zecchini. See Carlo Knight (ed.), *La 'Memoria delle piture' di Angelica Kauffmann*. Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome 1998, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> For details of the painting, see Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini (eds.), *Grand Tour. Il fascino dell'Italia nel XVIII secolo*, exhib. cat., Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni 1997, no. 21 (here the name is spelt 'Grignon').

<sup>8</sup> This unpublished painting is dated 1775. Today, it is still held at Powis Castle, Welshpool, Wales.