

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



HUBERT ROBERT

1733 - Paris - 1808

Two Roman Soldiers Resting in Front of a Ruined Monument

Red chalk on laid paper; executed c.1767.

369 x 289 mm

PROVENANCE: François Renaud, Paris (Lugt 1042) – A. C. Kidson – Sale, London, Christie's, 22 November 1966, lot 139 – Sale, New York, Christie's, 24 January 2001, lot 119

LITERATURE: *Les Hubert Robert de Besançon*, exhib. cat., Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Besançon 2013-14, p. 148, under no. 120, fig. 120 a

In 1754, Hubert Robert travelled to Italy in the entourage of the Comte de Stainville, French Ambassador to the Holy See, who acted as the young artist's protector. During his eleven years in Rome, he grew interested in landscape and the architecture of ancient and modern Rome. He studied extensively the ancient ruins providing him with ample motifs for future paintings and drawings. After returning to France, Robert was accepted into the Académie Royale in 1766 and began to exhibit at the Salon. He was later appointed *dessinateur des jardins du roi* and *garde des tableaux* for the new museum, the Louvre.¹

Our elegant and sensitive composition depicts two roman soldiers resting in the countryside near an ancient ruined monument that resembles a mausoleum. Robert has used his medium of red chalk to create subtle contrasts in the drawing. The trees and vegetation are depicted in a stronger red tone than the architecture, allowing for more depth in the landscape but also heightening the subtle nuances of light and shade. A counterproof taken from our drawing is at the Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon.² (Fig. 1)

One of the soldiers in the foreground is pointing to an inscription on the pediment, which had been changed by the artist after the taking of the counterproof. On the present sheet the word remains mysterious and could be transcribed as 'QHABQR', on the counterproof it is the inverse but clearly readable name 'CHABOT'. Hubert Robert had executed the present drawing around 1767, probably for the Duc and Duchesse de Chabot.

Louis-Antoine-Auguste de Rohan-Chabot, Duc de Chabot, and Elisabeth-Louise de La Rochefoucauld-Enville were married in Paris in 1757. From the late 1760s and throughout the 1770s the Chabots were animators of a well-known weekly gathering of amateur artists who came to sketch under the eyes of some of the foremost painters of the period at the Hôtel de La Rochefoucauld, called the Académie des Chabot. These events allowed accomplished artists, such as Robert, to socialize with distinguished and wealthy patrons such as the Duchesse de Chabot, her sisters-in-law the Comtesse de Jarnac and

¹ Alvin L. Clark, *Mastery & Elegance. Two Centuries of French Drawings from the Collection of Jeffrey E. Horvitz*, exhib. cat., Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Mass. et al. 1999-2000, p. 403.

² *Les Hubert Robert de Besançon*, *op. cit.*, p. 148, no. 120, reprod.

the Princesse de Beauvau, the Duc de Liancourt, and the amateur artist and financier Watelet. The Duc de Chabot was also a great collector of Robert's works. In 1773, he bought thirty-four of his drawings for nine hundred and sixty livres. In January 1775 he purchased a further six hundred livres-worth of drawings.³

The landscape with ruins is not only a pretext to reflect on the future of mankind, but also part of an unconstrained familiarity with antiquity that pervades so many drawings by Hubert Robert.



Fig. 1: *Deux guerriers observant le tombeau de «Chabot»*
Counterproof in red chalk, taken from the present drawing,
370 x 290 mm.
Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon [inv. no. 452, no. 3]

³ Gabriel Wick, 'Hubert Robert and the renovation of the Tour de Guy at the château of La Roche-Guyon', in *The Journal of Garden History*, 41 : 2, p. 230.