

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



HEINRICH BÜRKEL

1802 Pirmasens - Munich 1869

Terme di Caracalla, Rome, c.1830-32

Oil on paper, laid down on board. Bearing a label on the verso signed by Luigi Bürkel, the artist's son, confirming the authenticity of the work.

40.0 x 57.5 cm

PROVENANCE: Galerie Heinemann, Munich (inv. 15372; 1928) – F. von dem Busche, Bonn – Anonymous auction sale, *Alte Meister*, Lempertz, Cologne 1988, lot 387, repr. - Asta von Sydow, Hamburg – Thence by descent

LITERATURE: Luigi von Bürkel, *Heinrich Bürkel. Ein Malerleben der Biedermeierzeit*, Munich 1940, no. 99 – Hans-Peter Bühler and Albrecht Krückl, *Heinrich Bürkel mit Werkverzeichnis der Gemälde*, Munich 1989, p. 292, no. 568, repr.

Born in Pirmasens, Germany, in 1802, Heinrich Bürkel moved to Munich in 1822. Distancing himself from academic teaching, he educated himself by copying Dutch Old Masters in the Bavarian Royal Collection. He travelled widely in Upper Bavaria and the Tyrol, first visiting Italy in 1827.

In the spring of 1831, he showed four works at an international exhibition on the Capitoline Hill organized by the association of German Artists in Rome. The celebrated Danish sculptor and collector Bertel Thorvaldsen was deeply impressed by the quality of Bürkel's work and purchased two paintings. They are now housed at the Thorvaldsen Museum in Copenhagen.¹

The present oil study was executed on Bürkel's second sojourn in Italy in 1830-32. He spent most of this stay in Rome and the environs. His mastery as a landscapist and his skill in the rendering of topographical detail are uncontested. This was often combined with a predilection for genre and anecdotal subject matter. Contrary to his general working method, in this oil study he adopts a fluid and almost modern style of painting which is also discernible in a small group of comparable works.² Staffage plays a secondary role and he gives free rein to his imagination in this striking depiction of the picturesque, crumbling ruins of the classical world. The study bears comparison with the pictorial and colouristic sensibility of Corot, although Corot was to refine this notion of the 'modern' to perfection.

In Ancient Rome the Terme di Caracalla [Baths of Caracalla] were the city's second largest public baths. They were probably built between AD 212 (or 211) and AD 216-17 under Emperors Septimius Severus and Caracalla. They remained in operation until the sixth century but were abandoned after the Ostrogoths severed Rome's water supply in 537. Much of the building was destroyed in the earthquake of 847. The Baths inspired the construction of numerous other notable buildings such as the Baths of Diocletian (opened in AD 306) and the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine in the Roman Forum

¹ See Bühler, op. cit., nos. 554 and 579, pp. 290 and 293, repr.

² Id., nos. 564, 566, 567, 569 and 570, pp. 291-2, repr.

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(completed in AD 312). Originally, the Baths of Caracalla consisted of a large complex of buildings covering approximately 25 ha (62 acres) with many inner courts, as depicted in a watercolour (Fig. 1)³ by Giovan Battista Lusieri (1755–1821), ‘Regio Pittore delle Antichità’ [Royal Antiquities Painter] in Naples.



Fig. 1: Giovan Battista Lusieri (1755 - 1821)
Terme di Caracalla, Rome
Watercolour, 460 x 638 mm.
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence [inv. 57.098]

³ 460 x 638 mm. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (inv. 57.098). See *Paysages d'Italie – Les peintres du plein air (1780-1830)*, exhib. cat., Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris 2001, p. 71, no. 44, repr.