

FRANCESCA ANTONACCI

DAMIANO LAPICCIRELLA

Jakob Philipp Hackert

Four drawings

from the collection of

Prince Henri d'Orleans, Comte de Paris



Jakob Philipp HACKERT

(Prenzlau, 1737 - Florence, 1807)

Four drawings from the collection of Henri Robert Ferdinand Marie Louis Philippe d'Orléans, Comte de Paris

View of the Castle at Capraia
Landscape close to Sessa Aurunca
View from the Villa Borghese in Rome
View of the Valdinievole from Collodi

Provenance:

Legacy of Jakob Philipp Hackert; Karoline Luise of Saxony Weimar Eisenach (1786-1816); Helene of Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1814-58); Henri Robert Ferdinand Marie Louis Philippe d'Orléans, Comte de Paris (1908-1999); auction in Paris, Drouot Richelieu (Raymond de Nicolay, Christian Delorme, Vincent Fraysse), 30 October 2000, *Souvenirs historiques provenant de la Succession de Monseigneur le Prince Henri d'Orléans Comte de Paris*, nos. 24, 27, 28, 29. For their earlier provenance see the essay below.

General bibliography for Hackert:

Claudia Nordhoff/Hans Reimer, *Jakob Philipp Hackert 1737-1807. Verzeichnis seiner Werke*. 2 vols., Berlin 1994. - Cesare de Seta/Claudia Nordhoff, *Hackert*. Naples 2005. - Catalogue of the exhibition entitled *Jakob Philipp Hackert, la linea analitica della pittura di paesaggio in Europa*, curated by Cesare de Seta, Caserta, Reggia, 2007. - Catalogue of the exhibition entitled *Jakob Philipp Hackert, Europas Landschaftsmaler der Goethezeit*, curated by Andreas Stolzenburg, Weimar, Neues Museum, Hamburg, Kunsthalle, 2008. - Claudia Nordhoff (ed.), *Jakob Philipp Hackert, Briefe (1761-1806)*. Gottingen 2012.

Drawings 3 and 4 were published by Claudia Nordhoff 2012, p. 272 e 612

After studying in Berlin and then spending three years in Paris, Jakob Philipp Hackert arrived in Rome in the winter of 1768. He immediately began to visit picture galleries and ancient ruins, and to explore the city's outskirts, journeying for instance to the Colli Albani, the Monti Sabini and the hills around Tivoli. His views soon became very popular, and by about 1780 Hackert had become the best-known and most sought-after landscape artist not only in Rome but anywhere in Europe. He made the acquaintance of King Ferdinand IV of Naples, of the House of Bourbon, in 1782 and entered his service as first painter to the court in 1786. He stayed in Naples, a figure of great honour and esteem, until 1799 when the revolutionary climate prompted him to seek refuge in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. Settling in Florence, he rebuilt his life thanks to his increasing skill as a painter, and eventually bought a villa with two farms in Careggi on the outskirts of Florence, where he also devoted his time to farming. He died in Florence on 28 April 1807 and was buried in the non-Catholic cemetery in Leghorn.

Hackert's output as a painter is rooted in the sketches that he made while conducting his trips into the country, a method exemplified by the four drawings under discussion here.

The four drawings provide impressive evidence of Hackert's skill in "transcribing" the features of a landscape, focusing on the aspects that he considered essential. In dispensing with such factors as colour and the effect of light and shade, and thus forgoing rendering the plasticity of the objects he depicts, the artist "records" the individual features of the areas through which he travels using only their silhouette, reducing visible reality to a bare graphic structure, yet he still manages to include all the necessary information. Trees, animals and rock formations are portrayed with intense realism and the observer never doubts that either the individual details depicted or the view as a whole, such as for example the position of the hills in the panorama of the Valdinievole, are anything but an absolutely faithful image of reality.

The drawings are characterised by a crowded succession of different forms that the artist sets against lofty, clear skies, rivers and streams, indicated only by empty paper. Yet another example of Hackert's immense skill, he thus avoids tiring the observer's eye, producing an artistic balance between the world created by his pen and the void deliberately left empty which requires the imagination of the mind's eye for it to be interpreted as sky or as water. Even though the

drawings may seem unfinished at first sight, their freshness and immediacy together with the clear self-assuredness that governs their execution, convinces us that we are looking at self-contained works of art. That conviction is confirmed by Hackert's signature, placed in every instance in a carefully chosen position along with the date and the name of the locality depicted, as if the artist was trying to tell us that in his view there is nothing further to add to the sketch and that the artistic process may therefore be considered complete.

Hackert might finish his silhouette drawings with a sepia brush in his workshop and sell them to travellers on the art market, but in actual fact he kept many of them with him because in many ways they comprised what we might call his figurative memory. Writing with satisfaction in his old age to the German poet Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832), whom he had met in Naples in 1787, he says:

“I am certainly not wanting for subjects; I have thousands of well-made drawings from nature and so I can claim to have almost the entire Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples in my folders.”¹

Only some of those “thousands” of sketches have come down to us, which is probably due to the fact that drawings completed with a sepia pen were more popular not only with travellers of the time but also with 19th and 20th century collectors, thus we may fear that many of his silhouette drawings have been lost or destroyed. Our drawings, which belong to the group of his first sketches and thus to his precious image archive, may therefore be considered important for that fact alone, yet they gain in importance if we consider their provenance, which leads directly to Hackert himself.

On Hackert's death, his legacy, including his drawings and paintings, went to his brother-in-law, Berlin Councillor Friedrich Christian Behrendt (1765?-1838) who organised their removal from Florence to Berlin. This is most likely to be the source of the drawings under discussion here. They belonged to a group of thirty-two drawings which can be traced back with certainty to the collection of Princess Karoline Luise of Saxony Weimar Eisenach (1786-1816), the daughter of Duke Carl August (1757-1828). The princess had a passion for drawing and was a dear friend of Goethe, himself a skilled draughtsman and a collector of drawings. Goethe had been deeply impressed by his meeting with Hackert in 1787, and in his diary he even mentions an excursion in the painter's company to Tivoli, where Hackert acted as his drawing teacher. There is correspondence pointing to their renewed acquaintance in 1803, and Goethe – who owned many of Hackert's drawings, which may still be seen in Weimar today – subsequently had his friend's autobiographical notes sent to him, filling them out and publishing them in 1811.

Goethe was informed of Hackert's death without delay, in April 1807, by the young painter Wilhelm Titel (1784-1862), who was a guest of the celebrated landscape artist in the last few months of his life, and must therefore have heard almost immediately of the opportunity to purchase

drawings from the late artist's legacy which Councillor Behrendt had had removed to Berlin. Behrendt, for his part, had already begun to sell Hackert's work in Florence and he undoubtedly continued to do so in Berlin.² The group of thirty-two drawings from which our four sketches originally hail consists of work from every phase of Hackert's career, thus revealing that he kept them as material for study and that they were therefore in his house when he died. Moreover, the group contains preparatory studies for a cycle of ports of the Kingdom of Naples commissioned by King Ferdinand IV and which the artist could never have sold because the “copyright” for the cycle was held by the king himself. And indeed the only other preparatory studies to have survived for this cycle are to be found in the Berlin prints cabinet, which they entered as part of the artist's legacy well after his death. So we may be almost absolutely certain that the thirty-two drawings purchased by Karoline Luise came from Hackert's legacy and that the purchase was brokered by Goethe, the princess's adviser in matters relating to art and well-informed regarding the practical aspects of his old friend's legacy.

When the princess married Duke Friedrich Ludwig of Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1778-1819) in July 1810, she brought the works with her as part of her dowry. She was later to become a very keen collector of landscape drawings. After her premature death, the thirty-two drawings were inherited by her daughter Helene Luise Elisabeth of Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1814-58), who married Prince Ferdinand Philippe Louis Charles Henri Rosolin d'Orléans (1810-42) and brought Hackert's works with her to France. The next owner, her son Robert d'Orléans, duc de Chartres (1840-1910), married his cousin Françoise d'Orléans (1844-1925) and their heir was their son Jean Pierre Clément Maria d'Orléans, duc de Guise (1874-1940) and the husband of Isabelle Marie Laure Mercédès Ferdinande d'Orléans. The couple was followed by their son Henri Robert Ferdinand Marie Louis Philippe d'Orléans, Comte de Paris (1908-1999).

Hackert's drawings were auctioned off along with other works of art, uniforms, weapons and period costumes, and soon found their way into several different art galleries.

The importance of the four drawings under discussion here lies not only in their being excellent examples of Hackert's skill and talent as an artist but also in their history and in their association with Goethe and with the Weimar court. Thus we may confidently conclude that they can be labelled a valuable addition to the catalogue of Jakob Philipp Hackert.

Dr. Claudia Nordhoff

- 1 Letter dated Weimar, 10 May 1803, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv. Cited by Nordhoff 2012, p. 194: “An Stof fehlt es mir nicht ich habe Tausende Zeichnungen nach die Natur mit richtigkeit gezeichnet, so das ich sagen kan, das ich beinahe den KirchenStat und daß Königreich Napel u Sicilien in meine Portefeuls habe.”
- 2 See an article in the *Gazzetta Toscana* dated 19 September 1807 informing readers of the opportunity to purchase Hackert's work from his heirs, i.e. Behrendt (see Nordhoff 2012, p. 654).



View of the Castle at Capraia

Pen and pencil on paper, 52 x 74 cm.

Signed: *La Capraia, veduta da San Mingatello / Filippo Hackert f. 1800.*

The first drawing was made after Hackert's flight from Naples. Arriving in Leghorn by sea with his younger brother Georg Hackert (1755-1805) in 1799, the artist spent a year in Pisa in order to get established, and then moved permanently to Florence in 1800. He is likely to have explored the outskirts of Florence immediately after his arrival in the city, setting out west along the Arno. On reaching the village of Samminiatello, he saw opening out before him the sweeping view shown in the drawing under discussion here. On the right of a broad bend in the river, we see the 13th century castle of Capraia, set on a rocky outcrop some thirty metres above the water. Inside the castle complex lies the small church of Santo Stefano, whose bell tower can clearly be seen in Hackert's drawing. Behind the tree, at the left bank of the Arno, we may imagine the Medici Villa dell'Ambrogiana, situated directly across the water from Capraia in the vicinity of the small town of Montelupo Fiorentino. This town is depicted by Hackert in a second drawing from the same provenance as the four drawings under discussion here, unsigned and undated but undoubtedly drawn in the course of the same excursion in 1800. In it we see the castle of Capraia on the right and Montelupo on a hill on the left, while in our drawing we have to imagine Montelupo set up high beyond its left-hand edge (ill. 1).¹ Hackert used this

latter view as a model for a picture which he painted in 1802 and which is now in Montpellier.²



1. Jakob Philipp Hackert, *View of Montelupo and of the Castle of Capraia*. Private collection. Pen in brown on pencil, 760 x 545 mm



Landscape close to Sessa Aurunca

Pen and pencil on paper, 56.5 x 69 cm.

Signed: *à Sessa 1794. / Filippo Hackert. d[e].*

This drawing dates back to the years in which Hackert was at the court of King Ferdinand IV of Naples. It shows a waterfall bordered by thick clumps of poplar in the vicinity of

the small village of Sessa Aurunca on the slopes of the Monte Santa Croce, an extinct volcano close to Roccamonfina to the north of Naples. The Via Appia, which the artist frequently took when travelling from Rome to Naples, runs right through the village. Hackert visited Sessa Aurunca for the first time in 1792 and returned two years later in the king's entourage when Ferdinand chose it as the venue for a military exercise which Hackert, in his capacity as court painter, was to record in a large canvas dated 1794.³ As we can see from this drawing, the artist also used the time that he spent in Sessa Aurunca to explore the surrounding area, coming upon this waterfall. Another drawing, made in the same year and now in Berlin, shows the houses and churches of Sessa Aurunca in the background while in the foreground we see a road – probably the Via Appia – with peasants walking along it.⁴ Hackert touched up this latter drawing using a paintbrush and thus imparting a more finished feel to it, which suggests that he may have been thinking of selling it on the art market. In any event, it appears that he hung on to both the Berlin drawing and the drawing under discussion here almost until his death because he used both again in 1806 as models for a painting depicting the village of Sessa Aurunca in the background and the waterfall edged with poplar trees in the foreground (ill.2).⁵



2. Jakob Philipp Hackert, *View of Sessa Aurunca*, oil on canvas, 64 x 94.5 cm., signed *Phi Hackert 1806*. Private collection.



View from the Villa Borghese in Rome

Pen and pencil on paper, 51 x 64 cm.

Signed: *fait dans la Villa Borghesi par Ph. Hackert 1781.*

The third drawing was drawn in the Villa Borghese (also known as the Villa Pinciana) in Rome, the property of Prince Marcantonio IV Borghese (1730-1800). The date on the drawing, 1781, immediately conjures up one of the most prestigious commissions that Hackert received during his time in Rome, namely the decoration of the Salone (or Loggia) di Lanfranco on the first floor of the villa. The contract, drawn up between the painter and his aristocratic patron on 7 April 1779, established both the number of pictures Hackert was to paint and their subject matter. He was commissioned to produce five large landscapes to be hung on the wall opposite the windows, and four smaller paintings with marine motifs for hanging above the doors. The job was to be completed by March 1781. Hackert personally considered the cycle to be one of his most important jobs, talking about it with pride in his correspondence. The pictures were subsequently mentioned by several travellers who saw them still in situ, but they were shared out among Marcantonio IV Borghese's descendants in 1888 and removed from the Villa Pinciana. Today they grace a number of private collections.⁶ Our drawing, made in 1781 and thus at a time when the commission was almost complete, was probably drawn by the artist during a moment of respite. The most prominent feature in it is a large umbrella pine whose broad foliage contrasts with the slender outline of a fir tree on the right of the composition.

What we are in effect looking at here is a “portrait of a tree”, one of Hackert's specialities. Throughout his life he showed a meticulous, almost scientific interest in depicting different varieties of tree, dividing them in his short treatise on landscape painting into three categories – round-leaved, lobe-leaved and oblong-leaved – on the basis of which individual examples could then be identified.⁷

The tree, however, is never displayed solely for its beauty but also as part and parcel of a specific landscape, recorded with realism and thus almost always easy to identify. In this instance we can tell that Hackert took his view from a standpoint in front of Prince Borghese's villa close to the Viale dei Daini, looking east. Classical statues, large ancient vases and sphinxes on pedestals still grace the area today much as they do in the foreground of the drawing. While the statues may have changed since Hackert's day, the sphinx and the large round vases visible in the drawing are all still in situ. Amid the leafy branches of the trees in the middle distance we can see a building with a number of outhouses, which we may identify with a suburban villa that has since been demolished but which still stood on the side of the Via Pinciana in a map dated 1870.⁸ Immediately to the right of this villa, we see in the distance another building barely sketched out with a row of statues appearing to adorn its roof. The building in question is the Villa Albani, which Hackert was to portray in several pictures, some from close up. So this sketch may be held to be an accurate document recording the surroundings of the Villa Borghese in 1781, and in that capacity it holds an important place in the Villa's iconographical memory, offering an unusual view not found in other illustrations of the period.



View of the Valdinievole from Collodi

Pen and pencil on paper, 54.5 x 74 cm.

Signed: *La Val di Nievoli presa da Collodi / Filippo Hackert f. 1802.*

The fourth drawing was made in 1802, when Hackert went on an excursion to Bagni di Lucca. Travelling across the flat plain between Florence and Pistoia, the artist crossed the Montalbano hills and the foothills of the Appennines to enter the Valdinievole, a valley that runs parallel to the lower Arno valley. The terrain, which is hilly and given over chiefly to olive groves, stretches from the river Ombrone to the river Serchio. Our view is taken from near Collodi, a medieval village which is now a suburb of Pescia. In the foreground, a traveller contemplates the view, stretched out alongside his sleeping dog. This is undoubtedly an “alter ego” of Hackert, who was a great doglover and who never went anywhere without one or other of his beloved pets.

Notes

- 1 Jakob Philipp Hackert, “View of Montelupo and of the Castle of Capraia”. Private collection. Pen in brown on pencil, 760 x 545 mm., no inscription. See the catalogue of the Hilmar Klemke Gallery in Cologne, edited by Claudia Nordhoff, *Hackert, Kniep. Werke aus dem Nachlaß Jakob Philipp Hackert und andere Provenienzen*. Cologne 2002, entry on pp. 49–50 (published in German and English).
- 2 Jakob Philipp Hackert, “View of Montelupo Fiorentino and Capraia”. Montpellier, Musée Fabre. Oil on canvas, 64 x 34 cm., inscribed on the back *Philippe Hackert 1802*. See Nordhoff/Reimer 1994, II, entry 311. The picture should probably be identified with a canvas found in the painter’s workshop after his death and mentioned in the catalogue of the works he left: “Capraja vis à vis de Monte Lupo à deux postes de Florence sur le chemin de Pise” (cited by Bruno Lohse, *Jakob Philipp Hackert, Leben und Anfänge seiner Kunst*. Emsdetten 1936, p. 152, n. 32).
- 3 Jakob Philipp Hackert, “Military Exercises in the Sessa Aurunca Area”. Caserta, Reggio. Oil on canvas, 140 x 218 cm., inscribed *Campo d’Istruzione di Fanteria, e Cavalleria in S:a M:a della Piana alle adiacenze di Sessa, eseguito nel Mese di Maggio dell’Anno 1794. dipinse Filippo Hackert*. See Nordhoff/Reimer 1994, II, entry 251; de Seta/Nordhoff 2005, entry 97.
- 4 Jakob Philipp Hackert, “View of Sessa Aurunca”. Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett. Pen and brush in brown, 52.4 x 74.1 cm., inscribed *a Sessa 1794 / Filippo Hackert. dl*. See Nordhoff/Reimer 1994, II, entry 864; de Seta/Nordhoff 2005, p. 198.
- 5 Jakob Philipp Hackert, “View of Sessa Aurunca”. Private collection. Oil on canvas, 64 x 94.5 cm., inscribed *Phi Hackert 1806*. The picture was sold along with another three paintings by the Lempertz auction house in Cologne on 16 November 2014, n. 1502.
- 6 For the cycle see Claudia Nordhoff, *Jakob Philipp Hackerts Bilderzyklus für die Villa Borgese in Rom*. In: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 61, 1998, p. 520–551; de Seta/Nordhoff 2005, entries 33 and 34, and Nordhoff 2012, p. 271–273.
- 7 The treatise is reproduced in full in an Italian translation in the catalogue of the exhibition entitled *Il paesaggio secondo natura. Jacob Philipp Hackert e la sua cerchia* curated by Paolo Chiarini, Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1994.
- 8 Filippo Troiani, “Carta Topografica del Suburbano di Roma desunta dalle mappe del nuovo censimento”. See: <http://www.archiviocapitolinorisordigitali.it/iip/iipmooviewer.php?IDA=90&FTIF=254.tif> (Archivio storico capitolino, no. 17719, 29).



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