

S P H I N X F I N E A R T



Jean-Baptiste Lallemand (Dijon 1716 - Paris 1803)

View of the Tiber, Rome, with the Castel Sant'Angelo and St. Peter's beyond

oil on canvas
44 x 69.2 cm (17¼ x 27¼ in)

In this beautiful depiction of Rome, a soft dawn light slowly envelops the scene. In the foreground a fisherman is standing over a woman who wraps the daily catch in a sheet, presumably ready for market. Beyond them a couple lazily relax, whilst on the far bank herdsman watch over their grazing cattle. However, these figures are not the focus of the work, but serve to animate the beautiful historic landscape in which they are set. Spanning the calm expanse of the Tiber is the rhythmic arches of the Ponte Sant'Angelo, which leads the eye to the imposing bulk of the Castel Sant'Angelo. In the background, surrounded by dawn mist, is the Vatican, dominated by the instantly recognisable silhouette of St. Peter's. Jean-Baptiste Lallemand has created a delightful contrast in this painting, where monumental architectural achievements are viewed through a prism of complete tranquillity and calm, before the start of the hustle and bustle of daily urban life.

The Castel Sant'Angelo is one of the most recognisable buildings in Rome. It was originally erected in the second century by the Emperor Hadrian (76-138 AD), as a mausoleum for himself and his family and the bridge also dates from this time. The building was converted into a military fortress in 401, and a Papal Castle in the beginning of the fourteenth century. It takes its name from a legend that says that the Archangel Michael appeared atop it in 590, sheathing his sword as a sign of the end of the plague. If the citadel is an emblem of the Roman Empire, then St. Peter's is an outstanding symbol of Papal achievement. There had been a basilica on the site since the fourth century, but having fallen into disrepair, its rebuilding can be seen as one of the architectural high points of the Renaissance. It has been described as 'the greatest of all churches of Christendom'¹

This vista was clearly a favoured view of Lallemands. In addition to a gouache sketch in Chicago², there is another fractionally larger, but otherwise identical, [depicts the Ponte Rotto](#), the oldest stone bridge in Rome which dates from the second century BC. Again Lallemand is referring to Rome's historic status, as a city whose primacy and magnificence stretches back to antiquity.

Lallemand was born in Dijon, the son of a tailor, and moved to Paris, becoming a member of the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1745. Two years later he moved to Rome, by which time he was a well-

known landscape painter, and he remained there for fourteen years. In Italy he came into contact with some of the leading landscape painters of the day, including Hubert Robert (1733-1808) and Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789), and the latter's influence in particular is evident in the present work. His time in Rome was characterised by a number of important commissions, but he returned to France in 1761. Here he continued to work as a landscape painter, but also expanded his repertoire to encompass many genres, from History painting to genre scenes inspired by Dutch seventeenth-century artists.³

¹ Fletcher, B., *Sir Banister Fletcher's a History of Architecture*, (20th ed. Architectural Press, London, 2001) p.719.

² Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, no. 2006.96.

³ For more on the painter's life and works, see *Jean-Baptiste Lallemand. Un Paysagiste dijonnais du XVIII siècle*, exh. cat, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, 1954.

Artist description:

Jean-Baptiste Lallemand was a French painter and draughtsman. He was the son of a Dijon tailor who taught him his own craft. In 1739 he moved to Paris to study painting, possibly with Giovanni Niccolò Servandoni. He is said to have travelled to England early in his career. In September 1745 he was made a member of the Académie de St Luc in Paris, and in 1747 he settled in Rome. During his 14 years in the city—interrupted only by a trip to Naples—he was in contact with such French artists as the painters Etienne Parrocel, Claude-Joseph Vernet (whose Italianate manner may have influenced Lallemand) and Jean Barbault, and the architect Charles de Wailly. (He later worked with de Wailly after his return to France, painting views of the château of Montmusard (c. 1770; Dijon, Musée des Beaux Arts). He frequented the Académie de France at a time when the architectural draughtsmen Charles-Michel-Ange Challes, Nicolas-Henri Jardin and Louis-Joseph Le Lorrain were there. In 1755 he taught Robert Adam landscape drawing. He worked on frescoes (destroyed) in the Palazzo Corsini, painting four landscapes in 1750 as well as adding figures to enliven views by Vincenzo Torrigiani (fl mid-18th century). At about this time he executed four large paintings of antique architecture (St Petersburg, Hermitage) for the Anitchkov Palace in St Petersburg. In 1758 he painted the *Finding of Moses* (Rome, Pinacotheca Vaticana), intended to decorate the papal bedchamber in the Palazzo Quirinal. Four large vedute in the Villa Lante at Bagnaia may also have been painted in Rome.

In 1761 Lallemand returned to France, staying for a time in Lyon; it is possible that four decorative landscape panels in the Château de Curis at Mont-d'Or (Rhône) may date from this year. In 1762 he settled for eight years in Paris, and in 1764 he exhibited a number of views of Naples and Rome together with some pictures of imaginary architecture and genre scenes at the Académie de St Luc. He then worked for the engraver and publisher Gabriel Huquier, contributing drawings to be engraved for his *Livre de paysages dessinés d'après nature*, as well as designing backgrounds for Antoine Watteau's *Figures de différents caractères* and Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *Divers habillements suivant le costume d'Italie* (1768). From 1770 to 1773 he was in Dijon, where he was a member of the jury for the new Ecole de Dessin. It was at this time that he must have begun contributing drawings for the *Description générale et particulière de la France* (or *Voyage pittoresque de la France*), which was published in 12 volumes between 1781 and 1796. He executed no fewer than 140 views of Burgundy and others of the Franche-Comté, the Lyonnais, Champagne, the Ile-de-France and Normandy (Paris, Bibliothec National). While working on this detailed topographical project he continued to paint; he executed seascapes and 'heroic landscapes' (untraced) to decorate the refectory of the abbey of St Martin near Autun and painted views of Burgundy (destroyed) for the Hôtel Chartraire de Montigny in Paris. He exhibited a number of landscapes at the Exposition de la Jeunesse in 1783 and seascapes at the Salon de la Correspondance in 1786, by which time he was settled in Paris permanently. His last known works are three paintings depicting events from the French Revolution (1789–95), the *Charge of the Prince de Lambesc at the Tuileries, 12th July 1789*, the *Death of Jacques de Flesselles, Prévôt des Marchands* and the *Pillage of Arms at the Invalides, 14th July 1789* (Paris, Carnavalet). Lallemand tried his hand at all the 'minor' genres, including rural subjects and village scenes inspired by the work of the Dutch painters Jan Baptist Weenix and Jan Wijnants, interior scenes, such as the *Painter's Studio* and *Grace* (both Dijon, Musée des Beaux Arts), seascapes and, above all, views of

imaginary ruins, architecture, landscapes and topographical views.

Collection

Lallemand is represented in the following collections: Musée des Beaux Arts, Dijon; Musée Carnevalet, Paris; Pinacotheka Vaticana, Rome, amongst others.