SPHINX FINE ART



Pietro Giacomo Palmieri (Bologna 1737 - Turin 1804)

A Peasant Family and their Animals among Classical Ruins

signed 'Palmieri. In. fe cc.' (lower centre, on a rock)
black chalk, pen and brown ink, brush and grey and black ink, grey, black and brown wash, heightened with white
36.2 x 54.6 cm (14¼ x 20½ in)

Pietro Giacomo Palmieri's drawing shows a crumbling architectural ruin set in a slightly wild and overgrown landscape. An old lady and child are standing beneath one of the archways whilst a man on a horse, who is guiding sheep and accompanied by a dog and a donkey, looks down on them. The building is short, squat and carved from huge lumps of stone, its imposing form dominating the scene. The ruined state of the structure creates a worn and dilapidated air to the scene, its base is cracked and crumbling, the remnants of the tower above are barely standing, and creepers and plants have begun to take over. The surrounding landscape also contributes to this mood; huge boulders, bare and windswept trees and a dark and stormy sky suggest an atmosphere of untamed nature. This type of rugged and weathered landscape is typical of Palmieri's work.

One of the most prominent aspects of *A Peasant Family and their Animals among Classical Ruins* is the range of tonal contrasts that Palmieri has applied to the work. This is a recurring characteristic of Palmieri's drawings, as evidenced by *Landscape with Three Woman Dressing to Leave the Bath.* In this work the strong chiaroscuro of the women and animals in the centre of the drawing, achieved by the use of a bright light, is mediated by the variety of tone in the surrounding shadows. Although in *A Peasant Family and their Animals among Classical Ruins* these contrasts are perhaps not as stark, there is, however, greater variety to them on account of Palmieri's use of different washes.

Palmieri was born in Bologna, where he studied at the Accademia Clementina di Bologna with Ercole Graziani (1688-1765). He was invited to Parma by Guillaume du Tillot, a leading minister who was trying to make the court a cultural centre. It was in Parma that Palmieri developed his style of landscape,

for which he was later to become recognised. His works generally reveal a strong debt to seventeenth-century Dutch art, Italian painters, such as Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) and Guercino (1591-1666), and contemporary French works, particularly those of Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789). Typically, a few rustic figures, possibly with accompanying animals, are often dotted about rugged, isolated landscapes, which have clearly been moulded by the passing of time; a group of these landscapes were engraved and published as *Il Libro dei paessaggi* in 1760. Having lived in Paris for eight years Palmieri moved to Turin in 1779, where he worked for the Savoy court as an advisor for the royal collection of prints and drawings. He also produced witty trompe l'oeil drawings and accomplished compositions consisting of assemblages of prints.

Artist description:

Palmieri was born in Bologna, where he studied at the Accademia Clementina di Bologna with Ercole Graziani (1688-1765). He was invited to Parma by Guillaume du Tillot (1711-1774), a leading minister who was trying to make the court there a cultural centre. It was in Parma that Palmieri developed his style of landscape, for which he was later to become recognised. His works generally were strongly influenced by seventeenth-century Dutch art, Italian painters, such as Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) and Guercino (1591-1666), and contemporary French works, particularly those of Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789). Typically, a few rustic figures, sometimes with accompanying animals, are dotted about rugged, isolated landscapes; a group of these landscapes were engraved and published as *Il Libro dei paessaggi* in 1760. Palmieri lived in Paris for eight years then moved to Turin in 1779, where he worked for the Savoy court as an advisor for the royal collection of prints and drawings. He also produced witty *trompe l'oeil* drawings.