

CLARKSON STANFIELD, R.A.

(Sunderland 1793 - London 1867)

Roveredo

signed and dated 'C. Stanfield RA 1851.' (lower right)
oil on panel
39 x 60 cm (15½ x 23½ in)

Provenance: Thomas Williams of St. John's Wood, 1870;
T. O. Reilly;
by whom sold, Sotheby's, 5th November 1974, lot 92;
where bought by Apollo Galleries, Croydon;
with Thomas Agnew & Sons, London.

Literature: James Dafforne, *Pictures by Clarkson Stanfield, R.A.: With Descriptions and a Biographical Sketch of the Painter* (J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia, 1874), pp.32-33;

Jeannie Chapel, *Victorian Taste: The Complete Catalogue of Paintings at the Royal Holloway College* (A. Zwemmer Ltd., London, 1982), pp. 134-135.

Exhibited: London, Royal Academy, *Exhibition of the Works of the Old Masters, Associated with a Collection from the Works of Charles Robert Leslie, R.A., and Clarkson Stanfield, R.A.*, 1870, no.162.

THIS PAINTING DEPICTS THE ANCIENT FORTRESS town of Rovereto, formerly known as Roveredo, nestled in the rugged and idyllic mountain landscape, and caught in the early evening light. The bright ice-capped mountains beyond lead us down into the darker valley below, the Alps fortifying the valley and framing the composition. Perched on the cliff, overhanging the little party of travellers on the track, is the picturesque castle. The original foundations seem to be from a Roman tower, architecturally evolving over the centuries into a medieval turret, and this physical reference to antiquity thereby evokes an ancient landscape.

Roveredo is the most notable preparatory work for one of Clarkson Stanfield's most famous paintings, *The Battle of Roveredo 1796* (fig. 1). The Royal Holloway College's work depicts the Napoleonic battle,



Clarkson Stanfield, *The Battle of Roveredo 1796*, 1851,
The Royal Holloway College, London (Figure 1)

when the French defeated the Austrians, and was described by a contemporary viewer as 'Mr Stanfield's crowning effort'.¹ The present work is painted from a slightly different viewpoint, and does not depict the battle. Instead Stanfield's focus is on capturing the magnificence of the landscape. The idea of depicting the Battle of Roveredo may have been in Stanfield's mind as early as 1832, when an engraving of Roveredo was published in that year, in *Heath's Picturesque Annual* after one of his drawings.² Again, although the viewpoint is slightly different, the vantage point is essentially the same, and it is the staffage that differs. In addition to the present work there seem to have been at least thirteen other studies for *The Battle of Roveredo 1796*, although many of these appear to have been simple sketches, and most are unrecorded since the nineteenth century.³

Stanfield spent time travelling extensively throughout Italy and was renowned for his paintings of various topographical scenes. Much of his work, such as *Roveredo*, was directly informed by his many travels abroad, since whilst travelling he would make an extensive number of sketches. He was meticulous in organising his sketches, keeping them numbered and ordered. Later he would refer to these sketches in his studio to produce oils and watercolours, but rarely did he paint them from life. His first tour was to Italy in 1824 with fellow artist William Brockedon (1787-1854). In 1830, after several short trips to France, he embarked on a major trip to Venice, via Germany, Switzerland and Austria. The next ten years included more trips to Germany and Italy. In 1843 he toured Holland and in 1851, the date of the present painting, he toured France and Spain with his wife, Rebecca. He built up an extensive collection of sketches from these trips and would often take delight in using them to recount his journeys to visitors.

¹ *The Athenaeum*, May 10 1851

² Leitch Ritchie, *Heath's Picturesque Annual: Travelling Sketches in the North of Italy, the Tyrol, and on the Rhine*, (Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, London, 1832), p.185, plate 16.

³ See Chapel, J., *Victorian Taste: The Complete Catalogue of Paintings at the Royal Holloway College* (A. Zwemmer Ltd., London, 1982), pp. 134.



Stanfield 1841