

KARL PAVLOVICH BRYULLOV

(St. Petersburg 1799 - Marciano 1852)

Greek Lying on a Rock

signed with monogram (upper right)
ink on paper
21.7 x 26 cm (8⁵/₈ x 10¹/₄ in)

SLUMPED AGAINST A ROCK, THE GREEK CASUALLY gazes up at the viewer, leaning his head on his right arm. The sword, propped against the man's legs, lies redundant and the composition is awkward; this may suggest that the weapon was a last minute addition, perhaps to identify the Greek as a soldier. The lazy and relaxed posture of the man contrasts with the concerned expression of his face. The man appears weary and his face is cast down, however, his eyes stare wildly out at the viewer. This might suggest that the drawing was completed in a short space of time, perhaps from life, when the artist travelled through Greece. However, it could also be that Karl Pavlovich Bryullov depicted the man's eyes in such a manner in order to evoke the common nineteenth-century perception of the East as a wild and mysterious place.

The roughly drawn background indicates a wild and sparse landscape, and in the distance an architectural form can be seen atop a rocky hill. The inclusion of a background gives the painting a sense of depth and these compositional experiments may indicate that Bryullov was planning another work, perhaps a painting, based on this drawing.

Bryullov's work is rich with emotion and imagination. *Greek Lying on a Rock* is representative of the artist's observations from his travels. Bryullov's interest in the clothing and accessories of the Greek is apparent by his detailed and descriptive depiction.

Bryullov was the Russian son of an Italian sculptor; he enrolled at the Imperial Academy, St Petersburg at the early age of nine and studied from 1809 to 1821 under Andrei Ivanov (1772-1848). Bryullov never fully embraced the neo-Classical style taught by the Academy, preferring instead realistic accuracy counter-balanced with a love of romanticised melodrama. He travelled to Rome after completing his studies and established himself as a promising and imaginative student. Bryullov predominantly worked as a portrait and genre painter, however, he is best known for his historical painting *The Last Days of Pompeii*, 1830-1833. The subject matter is classical, but his dramatic treatment and generous use of *chiaroscuro*



Karl Pavlovich Bryullov, *Greek Lying on a Rock*, 1835, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (Figure 1)

renders the painting somewhat farther advanced than the neo-Classical style. Before returning to Russia, Bryullov travelled to Greece, Turkey and Asia Minor and as 'a master of drawing, sepia and watercolour' produced a suite of studies of Greece; the present drawing is most probably part of this set of works.² The State Tretyakov Gallery has a similarly titled and more complete drawing, probably depicting the same man (fig. 1). On his return to Russia in 1835, he became a professor and between 1843 and 1847 he undertook the decorations for St. Isaac's Cathedral. He has works in many collections throughout Europe and is remembered as 'one of the most significant Russian painters'.²

¹ Lloyd, B.G., *The St. Petersburg State Academic Institute of Fine Arts, Sculpture and Architecture*, (St. Petersburg, 2001), p.112.

² Boime, A., *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution, 1815-1848*, Vol. 3, (Chicago, 2004), p. 269.

