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Giovanni Antonio Canal, called Canaletto

(Venice 1697–1768 Venice)

Capriccio with a Ruined Classical Triumphal Arch, a Circular Temple, a Farmhouse and a Village in a Veneto Landscape, 1740s
oil on canvas, 14.5 x 19.3 cm

Provenance

acquired in the 1980s in the Viennese art trade;
collection Erna Weidinger (1923–2021)

We are grateful to Charles Beddington for his help with cataloguing the work. He inspected the painting in the original and confirmed it as the work of Giovanni Antonio Canal (the two small figures in the foreground left of centre may have been added or reworked later).

Estimate: 100.000–200.000 €

This painting, apparently unrecorded, is unquestionably the work of Canaletto and is entirely consistent with other works of the early 1740s. The painting is particularly close, in compositional structure, the character of the buildings the sombre tone and the subdued colouring, with the pair of paintings in the Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts, which are also of identical size (fig. 1 & 2: W.G. Constable, *Canaletto: Giovanni Antonio Canal 1697-1768*, Oxford, 1962 [and editions, Oxford, 1976 and 1989, revised by J.G. Links], I, pl. 94; II, nos. 513-14). The manner in which flat surfaces tend to be parallel with the picture plane is evident in all three and is a recurrent characteristic of Canaletto's painted capricci of this date. The artist's interest in painting capricci, which had been almost entirely dormant since 1723, was rekindled by a tour on the mainland, including Padua, made with his nephew and ridiculously precocious pupil Bernardo Bellotto in 1742. Canaletto had quite possibly never spent time on the Venetian terraferma, only having left Venice, as far as we know, in order to visit Rome in his youth, in 1719-20. The experience provided both artists with a repertoire of motifs for use in capricci set in the Veneto or on the borders of the Venetian Lagoon. Notable among those were ruined classical triumphal arches. A drawing by Canaletto of an imaginary triumphal arch next to the Lagoon, in the Royal Collection (Constable I, pl. 149; II, no. 789) was followed by Bellotto in a drawing in the Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt and, with variations in one of a pair of paintings in the Museo Civico at Asolo (S. Kozakiewicz, *Bernardo Bellotto, Recklinghausen and London*, 1972, II, pp. 88 and 93, nos. 116-17, both illustrated p. 90). Other drawings by Canaletto featuring ruined Roman arches in Lagoon or Veneto settings are in Detroit and at Windsor (Constable I, pls. 149 and 152; II, nos. 790 and 808). The mixture of classical ruins with contemporary





Detail

(and occasional Gothic) features in a fanciful Veneto setting recurs in numerous works by Canaletto and Bellotto at this date. There can be no question, however, about the authorship here. The handling of everything is entirely characteristic of Canaletto, from the classical column used as a repoussoir on the right, with sprigs of foliage at the top and bent reeds at the bottom, to the texturing of the stucco on the wall behind (which amounts to a signature) and to the distant blue hills. The round temple with two rows of arched niches and a columned portico is strikingly similar to that in a drawing in the Fogg Museum at Harvard (Constable I, pl. 157; II, no. 830). A round temple with a columned portico but only one row of arches is in the Wrightsman Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Constable I, pl. 90; II, no. 487; John Gash & Charles Beddington, 'Paintings by Canaletto and his father in Aberdeen University', *The Burlington Magazine*, CLIX, No. 1377, December 2017, pp. 976–81, fig. 27, colour). The way that the portico is supported by a brick arch over a void finds parallels in other paintings by Canaletto (Constable nos. 481 and 481*). A building poised on top of a brick arch also features in a recently rediscovered capriccio by Canaletto at Aberdeen University (Gash & Beddington fig. 26, colour; that also shows a similar treatment of a roundel sculpted in low relief). Other capricci of this date of similar tone and colouring and with similar components are in the Saint Louis Art Museum (Constable I, pl. 90; II, no. 488; Gash & Beddington fig. 28, colour) and in the Royal Collection (Constable I, pl. 91; II, no. 495).

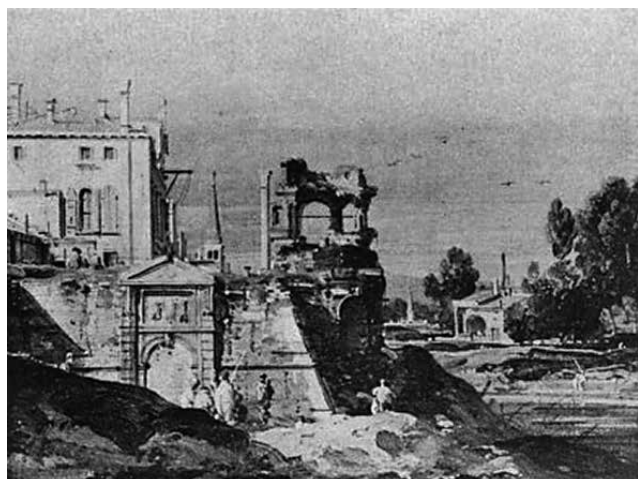


fig. 1 „A farmhouse on the venetian mainland”, 1760s, oil on canvas, 14.5 x 19 cm, Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts, from: W. G. Constable, Canaletto, Oxford 1962, vol. II, no. 513



fig. 2 „A villa and ruins by a river”, 1760s, oil on canvas, 14.5 x 19 cm, Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts, from: W. G. Constable, Canaletto, Oxford 1962, vol. II, no. 514

