

JAKOB PHILIPP HACKERT
(Prenzlau 1737 – 1807 San Pietro di Careggi)

*Country Folk resting beneath the Vines in the Hills above
Solfatara, with a View of Ischia, Procida and the Bay of
Pozzuoli beyond*

Signed, dated and inscribed lower right: *peinte par/Philip hackert/1793....
Vue d'Ischia, Procida, Baia d'Pouzzole/prise au-dessus de la Solfatara*
Oil on canvas, 65 x 97 cm

PROVENANCE

Private collection, UK

EXHIBITED

Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle, *Jakob Philipp Hackert: Europas Landschaftsmaler der Goethezeit*, 28 November 2008-15 February 2009, exh. cat. by Claudia Nordhoff *et. al.*, pp.203, illus. in colour; 336, no.73

Naples, the third most populous city in Europe after London and Paris, was an essential stop on the eighteenth-century Grand Tour. The spectacular coastline of Campania, studded with Roman ruins, drew travellers fired by the discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii in the 1730s and 40s. Jakob Philipp Hackert arrived in Naples in 1770 and in 1786 became Court Painter to Ferdinand IV, who ruled Sicily and most of Italy south of the Papal States. The crystalline clarity of Hackert's style tamed Ferdinand's somewhat unruly kingdom into the exquisite modulations of an English landscape park, and he travelled widely in Campania, Apulia, Sicily and Calabria.

This recently discovered painting is among the most poetic of Hackert's views in the area of Naples. The contrast between the shade of the vines in the foreground, with brightly dressed peasants resting, and the shimmering light on the sweeping bay, is painted by Hackert with the precision and luminosity of a watercolour, although he is working in oils. Hackert conveys the grandeur, timelessness and mythological resonance of this landscape as well as observing the daily life of contemporary countryfolk, little changed from classical times.

The view is taken from the hills above Solfatara, north-west of Naples, near the Capuchin church of San Gennaro built to preserve the blood of the Saint beheaded on that spot in 305 AD by Timotheus, Roman governor of Campania. The Feast of San Gennaro, 19 September, was in Hackert's day - and remains - one of the most fervent religious festivals of Naples: one of the spectacles that drew Grand Tourists to the exotic and vibrant South. On the Feast day San Gennaro's blood is transported from his church to the high altar of the Cathedral of Naples: its miraculous liquefaction is a sign that the city is blessed. In years when the blood failed to liquefy, plagues or earthquakes often followed.

In the centre right of Hackert's painting is the town of Pozzuoli on its tufa outcrop, with the cupola of the Cathedral, built on the site of a Roman temple. It contains the tomb of the composer Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1726) who died aged twenty-six in the care of the Franciscan friars of Pozzuoli. Further right is the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie. On the

other side of the Gulf of Pozzuoli is the castle at Baja built by Campania's medieval Aragonese overlords. Behind it lies the flattish island of Procida. Ischia's Monte Epomeo towers in the far distance, bathed in a golden glow. Framed by the vines to the left, at the furthest point of the coastline, is Capo Miseno with Monte Miseno. The vines, filtering the glare of the sun, give a delicious coolness to the view. Freiherr Johann von Gerning, describing the Gulf of Pozzuoli in 1802, commented: "Rows of poplars and elms, around which tall vines are twined and hang in linked festoons, keep one company as far as the calm of the seashore, where on the other side the foothills of Misenum and Baja are revealed, beyond which tower Ischia and Procida"ⁱ.

A similar *View of the Gulf of Pozzuoli*, dated 1785, was commissioned by the Grand Duke Paul Petrovich (1754-1801), heir of Catherine the Great of Russia and later Emperor Paul I, when he was travelling incognito in Italy with his wife Maria Feodorovna as the 'Conte and Contessa del Nord'. The painting was destined for Paul's exquisite neoclassical palace at Pavlovsk and is today in the Hermitage, St Petersburgⁱⁱ. Grand Duke Paul's view is taken from Monte Nuovo, with Pozzuoli on the left.

In 1796-8 Hackert executed three further views of the Gulf of Pozzuoli, one of which (exhibited at the Berlin Academy in 1798) is in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Romeⁱⁱⁱ and the others, both dated 1798, in private collections^{iv}. The Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna painting (Nordhoff cat. 274) and Nordhoff cat. 275 (private collection) are taken from the same viewpoint as the present painting, but with variations in the staffage, foreground vegetation and arrangement of the vines. Hackert made a fifth painting of this viewpoint, dated 1799, in the collection of Attingham Park, National Trust^v.

BIOGRAPHY

Jakob Philipp Hackert was German by birth but spent most of his life in Italy where he established his reputation primarily as a landscapist. His views immortalising the beauty of Italy appealed particularly to foreign visitors who acquired them as souvenirs of their travels abroad. Born in Prenzlau in 1737, Hackert first worked with his father Philipp Hackert (d.1768), a portraitist. He then studied at the Berlin Academy and in 1761 two of his works were purchased for Frederick the Great.

Hackert visited Pomerania and Sweden and spent three years in Paris from 1765 to 1768, where he was considerably influenced by the French landscapist Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789). In 1768, he left for Italy where he was to spend the rest of his life. He first settled in Rome and later visited Tivoli in 1769 and Naples in 1770.

Hackert's stay in Naples proved to be the most successful period of his career. With a letter of introduction to Sir William Hamilton, the English Ambassador, he found his first distinguished patron, and shortly after was patronised by Catherine the Great. His work soon came to the attention of Ferdinand IV of Naples, from whom he received numerous commissions. Hackert was appointed Court Painter in 1786. Among his most important works are a series of paintings depicting the ports of the Kingdom which include views of Naples and Campania, 1787, Apulia, 1788, and Sicily and Calabria, 1790. Hackert was influenced by Vernet's series depicting the *Ports of France*, and his series provides an important pictorial record of these southern Italian ports.

With the Republican uprising of 1799, the Court at Naples was forced to flee to Sicily. By 1800, Hackert had settled just outside Florence at San Pietro di Careggi, where he died in 1807. The poet and critic Goethe, whom Hackert had met at the Neapolitan court in 1787, published his biography posthumously in 1811, in accordance with the artist's wishes.

The work of Jakob Philipp Hackert is represented in the Museo di Capodimonte, Naples; the Galleria Nazionale, Rome; the National Gallery, Berlin and the museum of Montpellier, France.

Susan Morris

ⁱ **Reise durch Oestreich und Italian, 3 vols, Frankfurt am Main, 1802: vol. II, p.182. Quoted in Claudia Nordhoff and Hans Reimer, Jakob Philipp Hackert 1737-1807, Berlin 1994, vol. II, p.133, under no.274.**

ⁱⁱ **Inv. no.GE 7310; Nordhoff op. cit., vol. II, no.188; illus. vol. I pl.93.**

ⁱⁱⁱ **Nordhoff vol. II, no.274; illus. vol. I, colour pl.42. The present painting was not known to Nordhoff in 1994.**

^{iv} **Nordhoff vol. II, p.133, no. 275 (25 ½ x 38 ½ in / 65 x 98 cm), not illus., and vol. II, pp.133-4, no.276 (38 x 40 ¾ in / 96.8 x 103.7 cm), illus. vol. I, colour pl.43.**

^v **Nordhoff vol. II, p.137, no.284, illus. vol. I, pl.140. 38 x 53 in / 96.5 x 134.6 cm.**