

KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts



OTHMAR BRIOSCHI

(1854 Wien - 1912 Rom)

View of the Lago del Fucino valley from a hill, 1896

1896

Oil on canvas

55 : 81 cm

Signed and dated lower right: "Othmar Brioschi. Rome. 1896."

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A different kind of Italy: an impassable mountain pass with sparse vegetation in the blazing sun. On its steeply sloping hillside, stone houses scarred by the weather hint at the hardships faced by their inhabitants. Behind it, the view falls into a deep valley in Abruzzo to the east of Rome. Lago Fucino was located in this valley until it was drained in 1875. A mighty backdrop of clouds rises above the panoramic scenery. It is a reminder of the volatile weather conditions in the mountains and thus of man's dependence on the whims of nature. A farmer's wife dressed in traditional costume and her young daughter are unconcerned by all this. Unperturbed, they carry out their household chores. We see a picture of everyday life in a remote place where time seems to stand still and life has gone on as usual for many generations.

Othmar Brioschi, who trained at the art academies in Munich and Vienna in the 1870s and 1880s, is the author of this scene, which oscillates between meditative contemplation and an intense sense of nature. With his permanent move to the Eternal City in 1885, capturing the elegiac mood typical of the Roman campagna became the central theme of his work. In his meticulously executed paintings, influenced by late Impressionism, Brioschi juxtaposes colour in impasto patches, increasing their luminosity and making light the primary medium of expression. Although the artist adheres to topographical guidelines, his almost deserted paintings appear only indirectly indebted to reality due to their elongated formats, unconventional perspectives and unconventional framing. They almost seem like symbolist dreamscapes.

Brioschi does not portray an image of Italy in line with the public's expectations and thus sets himself apart from most non-Italian artists of the late 19th century in Rome. This secured the artist, who was sponsored by the Austrian imperial family, a high reputation among his colleagues. And indeed: anyone looking for a visualisation of Goethe's famous dictum of the "land where the lemons bloom" in Brioschi's paintings will hardly find it. Instead, he reveals a cultural landscape dating back to the beginnings of European civilisation in an unadulterated light.