

SEPTEMBER 18, 2020

Acquisition: Achille-Etna Michallon, "The Forum at Pompeii"



Achille-Etna Michallon

The Forum at Pompeii, 1819

oil on paper

overall: 16 x 22 cm (6 5/16 x 8 11/16 in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Gift of the Matthiesen Gallery and John Lishawa Ltd. in memory of E. A. Carmean Jr. (1945–2019) and Philip Conisbee (1946–2008), both curators at the National Gallery of Art

2020.15.1

The Gallery has acquired its first work by French painter Achille-Etna Michallon (1796–1822). *The Forum at Pompeii* (1819) is a gift from the Matthiesen Gallery and John Lishawa Ltd. in memory of E. A. Carmean Jr. (1945–2019) and Philip Conisbee (1946–2008), both former curators at the National Gallery of Art.

The Forum at Pompeii is among the earliest surviving examples of Michallon's work in oil from Pompeii and was possibly intended to be a study for a more ambitious painting. A quick sketch painted *en plein air*, it shows his interest in depicting the effects of light on the ruins. The mountains in the distance, painted with rapid brushstrokes in neutral tones, evoke an ambiguous direction of light and time of day. In contrast, the light on the ruins suggests a sunset streaming in from the right side of the canvas, depicted with light touches of color on small sections of the walls and thin lines of yellow paint that indicate the edge of a wall or side of a column.

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