Eugen Napoleon Neureuther, View of the Pincio and Palazzo Zuccari, Rome

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Fig. 1 Eugen Napoleon Neureuther (1806–1882), *View of the Pincio and Palazzo Zuccari, Rome*. Oil on cardboard, 52.5 x 75.5 cm. Purchase: The Wiros Fund. Nationalmuseum, NM 7350.
Eugen Napoleon Neureuther
(1806–1882) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. Between 1825 and 1830, he assisted his teacher Peter Cornelius in painting the frescoes to adorn the Glyptothek, a museum of sculpture founded by the art-loving crown prince Ludwig (I) of Bavaria. Together with his brother Gottfried, an architect, Neureuther travelled to Italy in February 1837. He arrived in Rome on 6 April and remained there until October that year, with a break during the summer months, which were spent in the Alban Hills southeast of the city. A major cholera epidemic in 1837 prompted many people to leave Rome as a precaution against the disease.

It was during one of these absences from Rome that the Nationalmuseum’s painting of the Pincio and the Trinità dei Monti church was executed (Fig. 1). It appears to have been painted in a house on the east side of Via dei Due Macelli overlooking the courtyard and the buildings on the southern slope of the Pincian hill. To the left is a glimpse of the stairs leading to the little piazza in front of Trinità dei Monti from today’s Piazza Mignatelli. Prominently in the middle-ground is a tall building with a taller central section. This is Palazzo Zuccari, which played an important part on the German art scene in Rome. This palace was originally built and decorated by the artist Federico Zuccari in 1590. To the right, below the tall facade, we see part of a garden wall with a round opening, but the famous portal in the form of a monstrous, gaping mouth is not visible.

Zuccari’s intention had been to house some form of art academy in his palace, but after he died, deep in debt, in 1609, his heirs rented it out as accommodation for many generations. Johann Joachim Winckelmann lived there for some time, and in 1786 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was there on a visit to the German art expert and agent Johann Friedrich Reiffenstein, who had lived in the palace between 1767 and 1793. As the illustrator of an edition of Goethe’s Balladen und Romanzen, Neureuther had been in direct contact with the poet before his death in 1832.

In the early 19th century, Palazzo Zuccari was the home of the Prussian consul general Jakob Salomon Bartholdy. The consul general kept his art collections at “Casa Bartholdy”, as his residence was known, and he commissioned four German painters from the Nazarene artist group to create a fresco cycle (1816–17, transferred to the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin in 1887), with subjects from Joseph’s story in Genesis. One of these artists was Neureuther’s teacher, Peter Cornelius.

Neureuther’s case – were probably one of the reasons why the palace is so distinctly placed in the composition. It is illuminated by the afternoon or evening light, while dark clouds appear to have recently passed overhead. In the painting, Neureuther combines the topographical precision that was typical of North European renderings of Roman city scenes in the early 1800s, with a keen observation of fleeting weather phenomena that are more redolent of landscape painting from the regions around Rome at the time (more on this in the articles on pp. 39 and 51). The rooftops and anonymous, slightly shabby facades with closed shutters and drying laundry in the foreground are portrayed in a way that resembles the new approaches that had been introduced in Italian scenes by French artists around 1800. This ostensibly random slice of reality outside the window is, in fact, a geometrically well-balanced composition. At the same time, the picture adheres to an older tradition of panoramic views. As in, say Lievin Cruyls’s drawn and engraved views of Rome from the 1660s, the image is given depth and credibility by the cropped building volume on the outer left edge, where a shaded terrace may have been the point of observation from which the artist studied the urban landscape.

Notes:
2. On the reverse of the painting is an inscription by Heinz Braune, director of the Neue Pinakothek in Munich in the early 1900s, stating the date the painting was made and its provenance in the artist’s estate: “Aus dem Nachlass von / Eugen Napoleon Neureuther, / von diesem gemalt 1837/38 in Rom / (Blick aus d. deutschen / Künstlerviertel bei der / Span. Treppe auf / S. Trinità dei Monti) / Prof Dr Heinz Braune”.
3. 100 Jahre Bibliotheca Hertziana. Der Palazzo Zuccari und die Institutsgebäude 1590–2013, Elisabeth Kieven (ed.), Munich 2013, pp. 72–102. Neureuther’s painting reproduced as fig. 102. The author wishes to thank Elisabeth Kieven for valuable information. Since 2012, Palazzo Zuccari is the seat of the German institute of art history research, the Bibliotheca Hertziana.