

JOSEPH ANTON KOCH

(Oberlingen, 1768 - Rome, 1839)

The meeting of Jacob and Rachel

signed and dated, lower left: *Coch* / *a Roma 1799*

pen and brown and grey ink and wash over black chalk heightened with white, yellow and brown gouache

530 x 740 mm

Provenance:

purchased in the Paris art market, 1970s

by descent to Private collection, Barcelona

This large, classical composition by the Tirolean-born Joseph Anton Koch belongs to a group of ideal landscapes produced during the artist's first stay in Rome, from 1795 to 1812. Clearly, he made such finished drawings as autonomous works for sale in the same way that he made landscape paintings. A relatively small number survive, typically on large sheets around 540 x 750 mm. The drawing media is standard throughout the series, tones of brown and grey ink on off-white or tan paper, extensively heightened with white and coloured gouache. They are often signed 'Coch' in a bid to Italicise his Germanic name. Indeed, the whole premise of his work in Rome was to drive further into the neo-classicism that had emerged a generation earlier with William Hamilton Mortimer, Henri Füssli, and Angelika Kauffman.

Our drawing depicts the meeting of Jacob and Rachel, an episode from Genesis (Ch. 29, vs. 10). As he reaches the country of his uncle Laban, Jacob meets Laban's daughter, Rachel, and opens the stone covering of a well so that she may water her sheep. Koch captures the pivotal moment of the story, when Jacob sees his future wife for the first time. A freely drawn sketch in the Kupferstichkabinett der Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna, may be considered as a preparatory study for the present work, blocking out the main elements of the design. Koch's ideal landscapes invariably show biblical or historical subjects within expansive, classically inspired settings, in the tradition of Claude Lorrain or Nicolas Poussin, whose engravings were a major source of inspiration.

Acquired by The British Museum, London

Online collection: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2026-7023-1