

**JOHN LINNELL**

1792–1882

**STUDIES OF A HERDSMAN**

Black and white chalk on blue-green wove paper

10  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches; 270 x 349 mm

Inscribed and dated bottom right in black ink:

'J. Linnell Ciren<sup>r</sup> place 1820'



Collections:

Stephen Somerville, London;

Charles Ryskamp (1928-2010);

Ryskamp sale, Sotheby's, New York, January 25, 2011, lot 71;

Private collection, Munich;

Bassenge, Berlin, 12 June 2023, lot.6798;

Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd.

Literature:

William Griswold, Cara Denison, Kathleen Stuart and Jennifer Tonkovich, *The World Observed: Five Centuries of Drawings from the Collection of Charles Ryskamp*, exh. cat. New York (The Pierpont Morgan Library), 2001, pp.100-101;

Matthew Hargraves, *Varieties of Romantic Experience: British, Danish, Dutch, French and German Drawings from the Collection of Charles Ryskamp*, exh. New Haven (Yale Center for British Art), 2010, p.174

Exhibition:

Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, *The World Observed: Five Centuries of Drawings From the Collection of Charles Ryskamp*, 2001, cat. no. 90;

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, *Varieties of Romantic Experience: Drawings from the Collection of Charles Ryskamp*, 2010, cat. no. 141

This boldly worked drawing shows two studies of a young herdsman leaning on his crook. John Linnell seems to have made the study in connection with a substantial exhibition work *The Dairy- Welsh Farmyard* which he showed at the British Institution in 1830. This sensitively arranged sheet formed part of the celebrated collection of the scholar and museum director Charles Ryskamp and was included in exhibitions of his collection mounted by the Morgan Library and Museum and Yale Center for British Art.

John Linnell had been trained at the Royal Academy schools before beginning his career as a landscape painter in 1811. As a student at the Royal Academy, he had spent time sketching

out of doors with other young artists, particularly William Mulready, William Henry Hunt and the more established painter, John Varley. His friendship with Varley's brother, Cornelius, seems to have stimulated both a religious conversion and a new approach to landscape painting. He joined the Baptist church in January 1812, becoming a member of the chapel at Keppel Street, Bloomsbury, and bought drawing instruments which would enable him to transcribe what he saw with scientific accuracy. Linnell undertook a number of sketching trips, visiting North Wales with George Robert Lewis in 1813. A sketchbook Lewis used survives in the Victoria and Albert Museum and shows that both artists were intensely interested in agricultural labour. The present boldly handled sheet shows two studies of a young farm hand, leaning on a crook and dressed in a distinctive white smock. As with Lewis's candid observations of agricultural labour, Linnell's study seems likely to have been observed from life. Linnell was assiduous at retrospectively signing and inscribing his drawings, so the inclusion of his London address, 6 Cirencester Place, does not necessarily mean that the drawing was made in the metropolis.

Linnell has used black and white chalks on a distinctive grey-blue paper, a method that points to Linnell's ambition as an artist recalling the working practices of sixteenth century Italian artists. The figure appears in Linnell's 1830 exhibition painting, *The Dairy-Welsh Farmyard*, which was shown at the British Institution. In the finished painting the figure is shown with a calf at his feet, confirming him as a herdsman rather than shepherd. This beautifully arranged sheet was a prominent fixture in the collection of Charles Ryskamp.