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TABLEAUX & DESSINS

CHARLES-AUGUSTE VAN DEN BERGHE  
Oil Sketches on Naples • 1828

TEFAF Maastricht

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## CHARLES-AUGUSTE VAN DEN BERGHE

Beauvais, 1798 – Paris, 1853

Son of Augustin van den Berghe (1756-1846), a former pupil of Suvée, professor of drawing at the *Manufacture de tapisserie* and at the *École centrale de dessin* of Beauvais, Charles-Auguste was first trained by his father in his native town. Sent to Paris, he improved his skills in the workshops of Antoine-Jean Gros and Anne-Louis Girodet. Admitted to the *École des Beaux-Arts* in 1817, he tried to win the grand prize for history painting. After repeated failures from 1823 to 1826 (*Égisthe, believing to find the body of Oreste dead, discovers that of Clytemnestre*, 1823, private collection, fig. 1), he left for Italy at his own expense.



1.

On his arrival in Rome in 1827, he became friend with Léopold Robert, who stimulated his interest in popular subjects inspired by Italian folklore. He also studied at the Villa Medici under Pierre-Narcisse Guérin and later under Horace Vernet, who was appointed director in 1829. After his return to France, van den Berghe followed the official career of a successful artist, executing numerous portraits. Taken from Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*, his *Major Heyward and the Hurons*, exhibited in 1835, shows the eclectic nature of his inspiration. The following year, critics praised his *Burial of the Virgin* (Nantes, cathedral, fig. 2), a posthumous tribute to the *Funeral of Atala* by his master Girodet.



2.

It was probably through the members of the Académie de France in Rome, during joint work sessions, that van den Berghe's interest in landscape and nature study developed. During this years, the practice of plein air painting became an integral part of the artistic training of the Villa's students. In the case of van den Berghe, this activity as a landscape painter was far from being occasional.

The numerous views of Rome, Naples and Venice that he exhibited at the Salons between 1831 and 1836 (*A Roman Woman*, *Costume of Nettuno*; *View of the Island of Capri, taken from the Mergellina in Naples*; or *View from the Lodge of the French Academy in Rome*) bear witness to this. All of these works are currently lost and the only landscape paintings known until now was a *View of the Gardens of the Convent and the Church of the Trinità dei Monti*, dated 1827 (London, private collection, fig. 3)<sup>1</sup> and a *View of the Dogana di mare at Venice* (Salon de 1833, private collection, fig. 4).

As our four dated landscapes indicate, van den Berghe visited Naples in 1828. He may have been encouraged to visit the kingdom of Naples by his friend Leopold Robert, whose brother Aurelius stayed in Capri in 1829. The search for local color, and incidentally for the beauties of nature, led van den Berghe to South. And here, as in Rome, the artist, who had come in search of "types", was seduced by the incomparable beauty of the Parthenopean city.



3.



4.

1. A. Ottani Cavina (ed.), *Paysages d'Italie, les peintres du plein air (1780-1830)*, Paris, Grand-Palais et Mantoue, Palazzo Te, 2001, n°133, p. 185.



*Napoli 1824.*

## CHARLES-AUGUSTE VAN DEN BERGHE

Beauvais, 1798 – Paris, 1853

### 1. *Vesuvius in the early morning*, 1828

Oil on paper mounted on canvas

15.5 x 22.5 cm

Dated lower right: *Napoli 1828*

Signed, titled and dated on the stretcher:

*Vésuve / Aug. van Ben Berghe / 1828*

In this view of Vesuvius, the artist was probably standing on the shore in Mergellina, an elegant resort near Naples at the time. The luminous evocation of Vesuvius painted by van den Berghe shows us a peaceful mountain, at the top of which only a light plume of white smoke suggests the low activity of the crater. In the foreground, the silhouette of the Castel dell'Ovo stands out between the sea and the mountain.

The fluidity of execution reveals the artist's pressing desire to capture the fleeting glow of dawn before it disappears into the new day. A simple artist's delight, this *pochade* only aims to evoke the memory of a stay that one imagines to be happy.







Naples 1828

## CHARLES-AUGUSTE VAN DEN BERGHE

Beauvais, 1798 – Paris, 1853

### 2. *View of Palazzo Donn'Anna, Naples, may 1828*

Oil on paper mounted on canvas

24.5 x 30 cm

Located and dated lower left: *Naples 1828 / mai*

Signed, titled and dated on the stretcher: *Palais de la reine Jeanne à*

*Naples / Aug. vanBenBerghe*

In this painting, the artist stands by the sea, in front of the famous Palazzo Donn'Anna, located at the beginning of via Posilippo, halfway between Mergellina and the small town of Pausilippe. Its name is inspired by that of the wife of its first owner, Anna Carafa della Stadera, Princess of Stigliano (1607-1644), wife of Ramiro Nunez de Guzman (1600-1668), Viceroy of Naples between 1625 and 1644.

The construction, initiated in 1642, was entrusted to the most important architect of the city at that time, Cosimo Fanzago. Left unfinished after the death of Donn'Anna and the departure of her husband, the building has the charm of an ancient ruin and the grandeur of Neapolitan baroque.

Since the eighteenth century, the palace was the anchor of several Neapolitan legends featuring Donn'Anna - sometimes confused with Queen Joan of Aragon -, beautiful fishermen, unhappy lovers murdered and returned to haunt the palace ...

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the two facades of Palazzo Donn'Anna were the subject of numerous representations by Neapolitan and foreign artists visiting Naples, such as Joseph Vernet (c. 1740, private collection, fig. 1), Joseph Rebell, Jules Coignet or Giuseppe De Nittis.





In 1881, the poet Matilde Serao described the palace in her *Leggende napoletane*: “The gloomy palace stands in the sea. It is not worn out, but it was never finished [...]. The high and wide unglazed windows look like eyes without thought; in the doors where the steps of the threshold have disappeared, enters jokingly and laughing the blue flood, deposits its shells on the stone, leaving the green and shining plantation of the algae.”

“At night the palace becomes black, intensely black; the sky is serene overhead, the great and beautiful stars shine, the sea of Posillipo phosphorus, melancholic love songs and monotonous notes of the mandolin come out of the villas lost in the groves: the palace remains gloomy and under its vaults the sea wave roars”.

Van den Berghe gives a less gloomy image of the famous palace. It stands in the morning light, which can be guessed by the shadow cast by the poles of the arbor. In the background, on the right, we can see the line of the coast between Mergellina and the Riviera di Chiaia. The artist has placed himself on a small overhang of the shore where a ginguette protected by a light pavilion was located.

This aedicula can be found in several contemporary works, such as Carl Wilhelm Götzloff's painting *Neapolitan Dances*, dated 1836 (Hamburger Kunsthalle, fig. 2) or in a drawing by Antonio Senape made around 1820 (private collection). The quality of the light, warm and golden, allows the artist's eye to register every detail with analytical precision.





## CHARLES-AUGUSTE VAN DEN BERGHE

Beauvais, 1798 – Paris, 1853

### 3. *View of Capri from the Beach near Palazzo Donn'Anna, may 1828*

Oil on paper mounted on canvas

28 x 23.5 cm

Located and dated lower right: *Napoli 1828 / maggio*

Signed and located on the stretcher: ... *à Naples / Aug. vanBenBerghe*

Dated May 1828, this oil on paper shows us the silhouette of the island of Capri in the morning light. The same arbor can be recognized in another work by the artist, *View of Palazzo Donn'Anna*, also dated "May 1828": we can therefore imagine that the artist took both views on the same morning, moving slightly to change his point of view.

Leaving the Donn'Anna palace on his left, van den Berghe captures the small building with an arbor, slightly overhanging the sea, extended by a guinguette protected by a light pavilion at the water's edge. These buildings can be found in several contemporary works, such as Carl Wilhelm Götzloff's painting *Neapolitan Dances*, dated 1836 (Hamburger Kunsthalle) or in a drawing by

Antonio Senape made around 1820 (private collection, fig. 1).

The artist's analytical eye excels in rendering the bubbling of the waves on the rocks in the foreground, while a fisherman's silhouette accompanied by a child seems to contemplate the ships in the open sea and the misty silhouette of the island of Capri.









## CHARLES-AUGUSTE VAN DEN BERGHE

Beauvais, 1798 – Paris, 1853

### 4. *Capri, Sunshine, 1828*

Oil on paper mounted on canvas

23.1 x 29.8 cm

Signed, located and dated on the stretcher: *isola di Capri / Aug<sup>te</sup>.*

*Vandenberghe 1828*

In this view of Capri, the island is offered to the spectator as his boat approaches the island. We can make out Marina Grande, whose beach serves as the port of the village of Capri, dominated by the formidable mass of Monte Tiberio. On the left, the point of the Campanella appears in the blue distance, marking the junction between the gulfs of Naples and Salerno.





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