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8 January 75

Dear Mr. Briganti:

It was good to hear from you after knowing you only through your writings. I'm most interested to know what you are doing with pre-Romanticism, a topic which fascinates me.

As for the male academic study you sent me, I must say that it would be very hazardous to make an attribution to David or to any other painter on the basis of style alone. And even if it were signed (you say that there are traces of a David signature visible), this would provide little security; for many such paintings, as well as portraits, classical subject paintings, etc., bear false David signatures. The difficulty is that there were of course countless such paintings executed by Frenchmen in Rome in the late 18th century, and they all bear a family resemblance to David. This one could as easily be by, say, D.G. Drouais or Bonvoisin, to name only two possibilities. Without certain documentation, it is folly to make a David attribution. I should also add that, on the basis of purely stylistic grounds, I suspect that the painting is somewhat later than David's Roman sojourn (1775-80) - perhaps in the 1790's. But these are in the nature of guesses.

I'm sending you back the color transparency, but keeping the black-and-white photograph. If you want this returned, please do let me know. Otherwise I'll keep it, in the hopes that it might fit into place some day.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Rosenblum
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