

*Marie Lødrup Bang: Joseph Anton Koch's
“Lauterbrunnental” and Johan Christian Dahl*

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It was not unusual in the 19th century for artists to work together on a painting or help one another with the work. The Thorvaldsen Museum has J. A. Koch's landscape from Lauterbrunnental in Switzerland, for which the Norwegian painter J. C. Dahl did the ornamental figures, a goatherd and some goats, as well as the foreground. According to Dahl's diary from his trip to Italy, he visited Koch on 24 February and 5 March, 1821. On 24 March, it was Koch who visited the Norwegian, and on 22 April, Dahl painted the figures onto Koch's landscape, which was intended for Thorvaldsen (fig. 1).

The landscape from Lauterbrunnental was based on a watercolour from 1794 (fig. 2), and even here we can see the picturesque style that is found in the painting, but simplified and harmonious, as was Koch's custom. The watercolour (fig. 3) is another example of a picturesque depiction of nature that is simplified in later paintings. Thus it is unlikely, as has been suggested, that Dahl painted the whole landscape from Koch's model. The Norwegian mentions in his diary only that he painted the figures and the foreground, and his own contemporary works, such as a Norwegian landscape painted in Rome (fig. 4) are more detailed; the vegetation is lush and greater emphasis is placed on atmosphere.

In spite of the differences in their art, Dahl was probably influenced by Koch's Swiss landscape, which might have reminded him of his own mountainous homeland (compare figs. 3 and 4). And they were both patriots, one closely bound to Tyrol, the other to Norway.