

Francis Towne



The Sala dei Filosofi, Villa Adriano, Tivoli

Reference: 11225

Dimensions:

Height: 16.20 cm / 6³/₈ in

Width: 22.20 cm / 8³/₄ in

Signed and inscribed verso: No. 40/May 22 1781/Villa Adriano light on the right hand side afternoon/Francis Towne and numbered by Paul Oppé: 15 B.P., pen and brown ink and watercolour on laid paper

16.2 x 22.2 cm.; 6 ¼ x 8 ¾ inches

Provenance

John Herman Merivale (1770-1844) and thence by descent;
With Squire Gallery, London, 1953, bt. Merivale for 50 gns;
Sir William Worsley, Hovingham Hall, Yorkshire (1890-1973);
By descent to Sir Marcus Worsley (1925-2012);

KAREN TAYLOR FINE ART

With Guy Peppiatt;

Private collection, U.K. until 2024

Literature

Adrian Bury, Francis Towne, 1962, pp. 95 and 143;

W.A. Worsley, Early English Water-Colours at Hovingham Hall, 1963, no. 68;

Timothy Wilcox, Francis Towne, exhibition catalogue, 1997, p.58;

Richard Stephens, A Catalogue Raisonné of Francis Towne (1739-1816), FT272

Exhibited

Leeds City Art Gallery, Exhibition of Early English Watercolours, 1958, no.33; London, Oscar and Peter Johnson, Lowndes Lodge Gallery, Pictures and Drawings from Yorkshire Houses, April 1963, no.33

This drawing dates from Towne's most important tour to Italy in 1780-81. He arrived in Rome in October 1780 and left via the Alps for England in August 1781. Towne spent about three weeks

in Tivoli and the surrounding area in May 1781. Tivoli had long held an attraction for visiting artists due to its combination of dramatic scenery and its link to the work of Claude and Dughet.

Towne produced over forty drawings and watercolours while in Tivoli. `No.1' is dated 1st May and the present drawing, number 40, dated 22nd May, is one of the last. Nos. 40 to 42, all views of Hadrian's Villa, and dated between 20th and 22nd May, were all at one time in the Worsley collection at Hovingham Hall. Adrian Bury describes them evocatively as reflecting `the haunting solitude and melancholy of this relic of the great and humane Emperor, Hadrian (op. cit., p.95). Nine of Towne's exceptional Tivoli views are now in the British Museum and no. 39 from the group, a wash drawing of Neptune's Grotto, Tivoli, is in the Tate Gallery.

Hadrian's Villa or Villa Adriana was constructed by the Emperor Hadrian in the early second century A.D. as a country retreat outside Rome. It fell into disrepair and in the 16th century, marble and statues from the Villa were used in the construction of the nearby Villa d'Este.