

Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli

Francis Towne

Sold



Description

Francis Towne (1740-1816)
Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli

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 by 22.2 cm., 6 ¼ by 8 ¾ in.

Provenance:

John Herman Merivale (1779-1844) and thence by descent;
With Squire Gallery, London, 1953, bought Merivale for 150 gns;
Sir William Worsley of Hovingham Hall (1890-1973);
By descent to Sir Marcus Worsley (1925-2012)

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

Exhibited:

Leeds City Art Gallery, Exhibition of Early English Watercolours, 1958, no.33;
London, 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 setting off for the Alps and home in August 1781. Towne spent about three weeks in Tivoli and the surrounding area in May. Tivoli had long held an attraction for British artists due to its combination of dramatic scenery and its link to the work of Claude and Duguet.

Towne worked assiduously while he was there, producing over forty drawings and watercolours. 'No.1' is dated 1st May and the present drawing, dated 22nd May and numbered 40 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 (op. cit., p.95) describes them as catching 'the haunting solitude and melancholy of this relic of the great and humane Emperor, Hadrian.' Nine of Towne's 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.