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(c. 1700 - 1777)

Views of Italy

Lampronti Gallery
30 June - 29 July 2016

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Marcella di Martino
Lyelle Shohet

Photography
Mauro Coen
Matthew Hollow

Cura editoriale
Federica Piantoni

Coordinamento tecnico
Mario Ara

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LAMPONENTI GALLERY
44 Duke Street, St James's
London SW1Y 6DD
Via di San Giacomo 22
00187 Roma

info@cesarelampronti.it
info@cesarelampronti.co.uk
www.cesarelampronti.com

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Antonio Joli

(Modena c. 1700 - 1777 Naples)

Views of Italy

Antonio Joli was an itinerant Italian view painter and scenographer. Born in Modena, he first studied with *Il Menia* (Raffaello Rinaldi) where he specialised in *vedute*.

At the age of twenty, Joli travelled to Rome where he trained with one of the members of the Galli-Bibiena family, famous for their stage designs, and later in the studios of Giovanni Paolo Panini (Piacenza 1691 - Rome 1765) and Viviano Codazzi (Bergamo 1604 circa - Rome 1670), to whom he owed the international style which would later make him famous. In Rome he gained an important commission to decorate the Villa Patrizi and in 1719 became a member of the Accademia di San Luca.

Joli returned to Modena *circa* 1725. After a brief *sojourn* in Perugia completing the interior decoration of Palazzo Donnini and Palazzo Crispoldi, he started working for the Duke of Modena. In 1732 he is first documented in Venice, where he designed stage sets for the San Cassiano and San Samuele theatres that were admired by the leading Venetian playwright Carlo Goldoni. During this period Joli painted many views of the city, influenced by Canaletto, Marieschi and Carlevarijs. Unlike Canaletto who abandoned scenography to focus on *vedute*, Joli immersed himself in the world of stage design and successfully maintained a career in both painting and stage design until the end of his working life.

In the following decade Joli travelled widely in Europe, first to Dresden and then to London where he worked

as a scene painter and assistant manager at the King's Theatre, Haymarket from 1744 to 1748. By 1750 Joli was in Madrid, working at the court of King Charles III of Spain at Buen Retiro. He returned to Venice in 1754 and was elected a member of the Venetian Academy the following year. These travels enabled the painter to expand his network of clients and develop his style of painting. Indeed, it is during these years that his *vedute* increasingly adopted a wide angled perspective, a pictorial device clearly inspired by the painters Vanvitelli and Canaletto. Joli spent his later years in Naples, where he finally settled in 1762, employed as Painter to the King in the Court Theatre.

His reputation as a leading Italian view painter earned him many important commissions from Grand Tourists, particularly among the English elite: Sir William Hamilton, Lord Montague Brudenell, the Duke of Richmond and Lord Spencer.

Joli's views are characterised by their sophisticated topographical accuracy, especially his Neapolitan views which typically feature members of the court. Many of Antonio Joli's works remain in the private collections of Lord Montagu (Beaulieu, Hampshire) and the Duke of Buccleuch (Bowhill, Scotland) while others are represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Museo di San Martino (Naples), the Palazzo Reale (Naples) and the Palazzo Reale (Caserta).

1.

Venice, a view of the Bacino di San Marco with the Church of St. Giorgio Maggiore and the Giudecca

Oil on canvas, 56 x 97 cm.

EXPERTISE

G. Briganti, 10 October 1990.

PROVENANCE

Sotheby's, London, sale 16 April 1980, lot. 18;
Galleria Salamon, Milan, 1990.

LITERATURE

R. Middione, *Antonio Joli*, Soncino 1995, pp. 66-67, cat. 11;
M. Manzelli *Antonio Joli, opera pittorica*, Venice 1999, p. 102, V.12, fig. 74;
R. Toledano, *Antonio Joli: Modena 1770-1777 Napoli*, Turin 2006, p. 202, cat. V.VII.

The way in which Joli decides to represent the Bacino di San Marco with the Venetian sunlight radiating beyond the clouds on the upper right, firmly dates the present painting to his first documented stay in Venice, between 1732 and 1742.

This *veduta* of the Bacino di San Marco is an impressive example of the kind of panoramic views which made Antonio Joli one of the leading eighteenth century *vedutisti*. The islands of San Giorgio and Giudecca are presented on the right-hand side of the present painting. The church of Santa Maria della Presentazione, known as the Zitelle from its function as shelter for young maidens without a dowry, and the basilica del Santissimo Redentore are clearly shown on the easternmost part of the island. The composition recalls a similar view by Marieschi, previously in the Carlyle collection, dated to 1735, but the present painting shows a larger stretch of the lagoon stretching as far as the churches of Zitelle and Redentore.

At the extreme end of the Giudecca, towards San Giorgio, the walls and towers of the Palazzo Dandolo delle Torri are visible. Built in the sixteenth century near the

church of San Giovanni Battista, the palace appeared in Jacopo de 'Barbari's famous woodcut of 1500, thereby providing an *ante quem* for Joli's present view. Indeed, this *veduta* further serves as an important work in documenting early modern transformations to the city, as both the church and the palace were demolished at the beginning of the nineteenth century to pave the way for a "Field of Mars" (*Campus Maritus*), a parade or exercise ground inspired by antique Roman prototypes. The island of Santa Maria delle Grazie is also visible in the present painting.

Although the painting appears realistic, in fact the relationship between the islands of San Giorgio and Giudecca has been visibly altered to allow for a full view of the latter. Thus, the painting reveals close stylistic affinities with Joli's views of Naples such as the one depicting the *Departure of Charles III from Naples* at the Prado Museum, Madrid. The anchors of vessels are almost identical in the Venice and Naples paintings. Moreover, the ways in which the ripples of the water on the surface of the Venetian lagoon have been articulated with specks of paint are typical of other works painted by Antonio Joli.



2.

*Rome, a game of 'Palla a Bracciale'
in the gardens of Palazzo Barberini*

Oil on canvas, 63.8 x 90.8 cm.

INSCRIBED ON THE REVERSE

A hand-written old label, dating to the first half of the 19th century reads: «Green drawing room Pictures [...] / Picture of the Drago Palace & Barberini / Palace gardens in foreground – game of Pal[la] / going on – by Vanvitelli delle [...] / 1736 Bought in Rome by Mr & Mrs H. Ol[mius?] / [...]05 as a souvenir of their stay in the Del Dra[go] / [w]hich was the American Embassy».

PROVENANCE

Mr and Mrs H. Olmius (according to a label on the reverse);
Private collection, United Kingdom.

EXPERTISE

Ralph Toledano, 21 July 2011.

The present painting is an exquisite example of Joli's fine hand and descriptive eye, representing the gardens of Palazzo Barberini, Rome, during a game of 'Palla a Bracciale', a precursor of cricket which became extremely popular in 18th century Italy. The game is akin to the English Pall Mall, whereby two teams of four players attempt to score by batting a ball with a racket tied to their arm.¹

Ralph Toledano has compared this composition, unique in Joli's oeuvre, to three views of Naples in which the same game is played.² Here, the viewer is invited to observe the game from an imaginary balcony opposite the palace, mirroring the position of the figures standing on the edge of the garden wall. From this point of view, the spectator can see the ball, eternally suspended in mid air in the centre of the canvas, other players following the game attentively as they wait their turn to play, and elegant figures looking on, or strolling around the grounds. The scene is enlivened by Joli's love of playful detail, such as the dog running after two children across the lawn in the centre, and by his enjoyment of architectural features and natural forms, represented in minute de-

scriptive detail as in Joli's other topographical views, known as *vedute*.

An old, early nineteenth-century English label attached to the reverse of the canvas, erroneously attributes the painting to Vanvitelli, suggesting it might have previously belonged to an English collection from a relatively early stage of its history. Indeed, Joli worked in London between the years 1744 and 1748, and his *vedute* of Italian cities always appealed to the English public in the age of the Grand Tour. Unfortunately, the Drago Palace mentioned on the label has not yet been identified, although it is known that the United States had been sending ambassadors as early as 1797 to the Vatican, Rome.

Ralph Toledano, who fully confirms the attribution of the present painting to Antonio Joli, proposes to date it to the artist's maturity, sometime after his return to Italy from Madrid in 1754.

¹ As a record for the origins of cricket there survives a painting by Pietro Fabris representing the game of Palla a Bracciale (1768) at the Marylebone Cricket Club (R. Middione, *Antonio Joli*, Soncino 1995, fig. 45).
² R. Toledano, *Antonio Joli*, Turin 2006, pp. 354-355, N.XXI.1/2/3.



3.

ANTONIO JOLI AND STUDIO
(Modena c. 1700 - Naples 1770)

*Rome, a view of the Tiber with Castel Sant'Angelo
and Saint Peter's Basilica*

Oil on canvas, 109 x 147 cm.

EXPERTISE

G. Briganti, 23 December 1982.

Although Antonio Joli is documented in Rome from around 1718 to 1725, he re-used drawings in this period later in his career, thus identifying the popularity of this design. The present painting, dated to *circa* 1759-1760 by Prof. Giuliano Briganti, is a product of this work process.

Joli's parallel career in scenography is reflected in his fluent use of perspective; the placement of the bridge in the foreground leads to the Castel Sant'Angelo, an ancient mausoleum and prison later converted into a Papal residence, on the right-hand side. The tomb of the Roman Emperor, also called Hadrian's Mole, was erected: 123-139 AD by the Emperor Hadrian to function as a mausoleum for himself and members of his family. Built in a suburban area, on the right bank of the Tiber, it is connected to the main city by Ponte Sant'Angelo, formerly called the Aelian Bridge and was later enlivened by a sculptural program devised by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) and completed by his collaborators.

Over time the building underwent several changes to transform it from a mausoleum into a military fortress. Legend holds that the Archangel Michael stood atop the mausoleum sheathing a sword to mark the end of the plague in 590 AD, thus lending the castle its present

name, *Castellum Sancti Angeli*, and gradually transferring the building's control to the hands of the Papacy (Sec. X-XIV). After the Sack of Rome in 1572, the interior became a refuge for Pope Clement VII Medici who fled the Vatican via Il Passetto di Borgo, the fortified corridor leading to Castel Sant'Angelo.

In the present painting, St Peter's Basilica dominates the background with the adjacent buildings of the Vatican to its right, while the sixteenth century church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, designed by Antonio Sangallo Junior, is identified to its left. The hill of Janiculum can be seen in the distance, beyond St. Peter's, on the horizon line.

Such was the popularity and success of the design that Joli repeated it several times. Presumably several of the versions were based on drawings that the artist took with him around Europe. In each different version the artist varied the mood of the sky and the arrangement of the staffage, though the boatman ferrying two figures in the lower centre seems to be a constant. In the present painting the sky is distinguished from other existing versions by the warm pink light of sunrise, which permeates the clouds across the canvas to create an overall atmospheric and serene effect.



4-5.

A view of the Gulf of Pozzuoli with the Island of Nisida

Naples, a view of the city from Santa Lucia

A pair, oil on canvas, each 75 x 129.5 cm.

PROVENANCE

Sacerdoti Gallery, Milan;
Private Collection, United Kingdom.

EXPERTISE

Nicola Spinosa, 2 March 2012;
Ralph Toledano, 21 May 2012.

LITERATURE

M. Manzelli, *Antonio Joli, opera pittorica*, Venice 2000, p. 82, no. 45 and pp. 86-87, no. 69, illustrated tav. XXI and XXIII.

Prof. Nicola Spinosa dates the present pair of views of Naples and Pozzuoli to the 1760s, a period in which Joli was active as court painter to Ferdinand IV (1751-1825) and scenographer for the Real Teatro di San Carlo in Naples. As with many of Joli's compositions, the design of the pair became particularly popular among local and foreign clients, as evidenced by the number of surviving versions of the same scene, each subtly different in its format and narrative detail.¹

In the first canvas, Joli presents a section of the bay of Naples seen from Santa Lucia, a historical *rione* (neighbourhood) perched on the sea. The church of Santa Maria della Catena, founded in 1576, is just visible in the left foreground. Opposite the church, on the banks of the *lungomare* (seaside promenade), stand a series of fountains that were moved to Via Partenope after the waterfront was redesigned in 1845. Past the fountains is the imposing Palazzo Carafa, which hides the church of Santa Lucia from the spectator's view. Behind the palace is the harbour, with the now lost *Lanterna* (the lighthouse), and the bell tower of the Chiesa del Carmine. Further up the hill is the Maschio Angioino, the castle first built by Charles I of Anjou (1226-1285) and later modified by Alfonso IV of Aragon (1396-1458) to include a triumphal arch designed by Francesco Laurana. In the distance, between Torre del Greco and Sorrento, Mount Vesuvius releases clouds of smoke against the clear, blue Mediterranean sky.

In the second canvas, Joli depicts the gulf of Pozzuoli seen

from Bagnoli, which extends from the headland of Capo Miseno on the far right to the shores of Coroglio on the far left. To the right, facing the Rione Terra, an inhabited area of Graeco-Roman foundation, is the island of Procida followed by the island of Ischia while the Mount Epomeo is just visible in the distance. In the centre is the island of Nisida, with the fortified castle of the Macedonio family, Dukes of Grottolella, on the right. A small islet close the coast, in ancient Roman times Nisida was a favourite location for holiday villas, including the one of Marcus Junius Brutus, Julius Caesar's famous nephew, where Cicero was often a guest. In Joli's time, the entire island belonged to the Macedonio, while in the following century its fortress was transformed into a state prison by the Bourbon monarchs.

Joli had first visited Naples and its surroundings while accompanying the young John Montagu, Lord Brudenell (1735-1770) on his Grand Tour. The latter had commissioned no less than 38 views of European cities and landscapes to Joli, now partly dispersed and partly conserved in the Montagu collection at Beaulieu. In 1760, Joli eventually settled in the Bourbon capital. Throughout these years the artist filled sketchbooks with pen and pencil drawings of a wide range of subjects, creating a repertoire he then used in the workshop. The view of the bay of Naples from Santa Lucia was an innovative composition at the time, possibly the result of the particular wish of an anonymous patron, while the gulf of Pozzuoli with Nisida derives from a painting by Tommaso Ruiz dated 1749.² The present views are executed with fine, luminous brushstrokes and a meticulous attention to topographical detail typical of Joli. The tranquil atmosphere of the coast, conveyed through the harmonious palette and the soft handling of the brush, is animated by the presence of figures busily going about their daily activities, features that are typical of Joli's narrative taste. Like Vanvitelli before him, Joli executed records of Naples and its surroundings to capture the essence of these lands, which became especially popular among grand tourists after the discoveries at Herculaneum in 1738 and Pompeii a decade later. Indeed, the present views are exquisite examples of the type of long-lasting testimonies Joli would have painted upon request from local and foreign patrons, as he had done for Lord Brudenell.

¹ See R. Toledano, *Antonio Joli: Modena 1700-1777 Napoli*, Turin 2006, pp. 316-322, nos. N.VI.1-7 and pp. 381-384, nos. N.XXXIII.1-4.

² See Spinosa-Di Mauro, *Vedute napoletane del Settecento*, Napoli 1989, p. 176, fig. 41.



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