

Giovanni Volpato (1735–1803) and Abraham-Louis-Rodolphe Ducros (1748–1810), *The Pantheon, The Temple of Antonio and Faustina* and *The Garden of Villa Medici* from the series *Vues de Rome et ses Environs*, ca. 1780, watercolour over etched outline, signed in pen and brown ink at lower left, each on its original mount, in a mahogany and ebony frame with gilded metal decorations, and the original 18th-century blown glass.

The Pantheon 19.7 x 28.8 in (501 x 732 mm)

The Temple of Antonio and Faustina 20.2 x 29 in (512 x 738 mm)

The Garden of Villa Medici 21 x 28.9 in (535 x 735 mm)

Provenance: Hoenzollern Family, Schloss Umkirch, Germany

Literature: Huber, vol. IV, 1800, pp. 217–218, nos. M2, M5 and M19 respectively;

De Angelis, vol. XV, 1816, p.91, nos. 2, 5 and 19 respectively;

Joubert, 1821, p.190;

Ticozzi, vol. IV, 1833, p. 41;

Nagler, vol. XX, 1850, p. 522, no. 17.2, 17.5 and 17.18 respectively;

Le Blanc, vol. IV, 1890, p.153, no. 97;

Francis Haskell and Pierre Chessex, *Roma Antica: Vedute di Roma e dei suoi dintorni di A.L.R. Ducros (1748–1810)*, 1985, nos. XXII and V (no mention of *Villa Medici*);

Pierre Chessex, ed., *Images of the Grand Tour: Louis Ducros 1748–1810*, 1986, nos. 30, 17 and 32 respectively;

Pierre Chessex, ed., *Ducros 1748–1810: Paesaggi d'Italia all'epoca di Goethe*, 1987, nos. 21, 13 and 24 respectively;

Giorgio Marini, *Giovanni Volpato: 1735–1803*, 1987, pp.146–151, nos. 239, 235 and 253 respectively.

Comparative examples: *The Panteon*, original watercolour by Ducros in a private collection in Geneva, plain etching by Volpato in Lusanne, MCBA (E-229), etching and watercolour in Saint Petersburg, Hermitage; Frankfurt, Goethe Museum; Amsterdam, Risjsprentenkabinett; and Stockholm, Royal Collection.

The Temple of Antonio and Faustina, original watercolour by Ducros in Rome, Galleria San Giorgi, plain etching by Volpato in Lusanne, MCBA (D-75-62), etching and watercolour in Saint Petersburg, Hermitage; Schloss Drottningholm; Basel, Kupferstichkabinett; and London, British Museum.

The Garden of Villa Medici, original watercolour in Lusanne, MCBA (D-844), etching and watercolour in Saint Petersburg, Hermitage; and Schloss Drottningholm.

The three present works were made in collaboration between Giovanni Volpato (1735–1803) and Abraham-Louis-Rodolphe Ducros (1748–1810) as part of a series of twenty-four pieces entitled *Vues de Rome et ses Environs*.

Born in Moudon, Switzerland, and trained as a painter in Geneva, Ducros first arrived in Rome in 1777. His talents as a landscape painter and his innovative use of watercolour made him an extremely popular artist, especially among the Grand-

Tourists visiting Italy from all parts of Europe. He was noted for painting watercolours on unusually large supports, often made of several sheets of paper mounted on a canvas, and for his ability to use semi-transparent paint, gum Arabic, and other resins to obtain a textured, painterly effect, greatly admired in watercolours at the time. Among others, some of his most notable patrons were Pope Pius VI (1717–99), Gustav III of Sweden (1746–92), Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1758–1938), Sir William Hamilton (1730–1803) and the future Tsar Paul I (1754–1801).

In 1780 Ducros joined Giovanni Volpato to make a series of twenty-four views of Rome and its surroundings. Born in Bassano and trained as an etcher, Giovanni Volpato had worked for several years for the publishing business of the Ramondini brothers in Venice before moving to Rome in 1771. Although his skills as an artist were great, his skills as an entrepreneur were far greater. He relied on Ducros's popularity as an artist to make etchings after some of his works that retained their most identifiable characteristics, i.e. large format and the unique use of colour, to sell to the flocks of Grand-Tourists visiting the eternal city. Volpato provided the etchings that Ducros later enlivened with his inimitable technique.

Although such works were in fact produced in multiples, they must not have been cheap. Due to its unusually large format, each image had to be etched onto an equally large copper plate, which required an extraordinary financial commitment from Volpato, other than extraordinary skills to transfer the design onto paper. On the other hand, Ducros had to turn what was a plain outline into an affective scene, adding other than colours, substantial parts of the design. For example, in *The Pantheon* only part of the scene is etched, while part of it was to be added by the artist, the most notable part being the two tower bells designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (fig.1).

The project was a success. Not only is it possible to find at least one impression from the series in the extant collections of Ducros's most notable patrons, but they also influenced major works of art produced in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Ferdinando Partini (fl. 1790s) appropriated the composition of *The Pantheon*, making in 1794 a painting after it (fig.2), which in turn was used as the model for a hardstone inlay made in the Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence (fig.3).

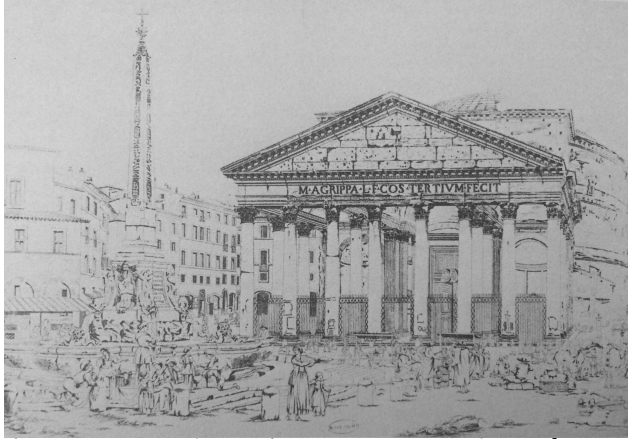


Fig.1 Giovanni Volpato after Luois Ducros, *The Pantheon*, etching, Lusanne, MCBE, inv. E-229.



Fig.2 Ferdinando Partini, *The Pantheon*, oil on canvas, 1794, Florence, Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure.



Fig.3 *The Pantheon*, hardstone inlay, 54 x 75 cm, Florence, Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure