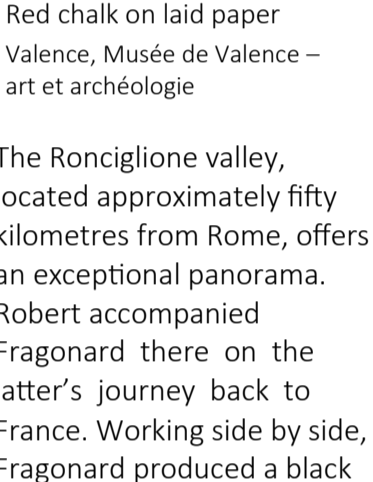


## **A mutual inspiration in Tivoli**

In the fifteenth century, Tivoli, located close to Rome, established itself as a genuine laboratory of landscape in Europe. The roaring waterfalls, the Temple of Vesta towering above the void and the grandeur of the half-buried ancient ruins have always fascinated artists. Fragonard stayed there during the summer of 1760, thanks to the Abbé de Saint-Non (1727-1791), a young enlightened patron. There he produced a series of red chalk drawings devoted to the ancient ruins and gardens of the Villa d'Este, which were then overgrown with vegetation. These drawings, which echo the views that Robert had produced a few months earlier on the road to Naples, already in the company of the Abbé, reflect the effervescence that reigned at the Académie de France in Rome. In this context, the red chalk drawings in the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Courtauld Institute in London, long attributed to Robert, have been assigned here to Fragonard, based on material criteria and artistic intentions.

Seeking to surpass the models of the masters, particularly those of the engraver Piranesi, the fellows mutually inspired each other, as evidenced by a red chalk reinterpretation of Fragonard's famous view of the tall cypress trees at Villa d'Este. In April 1761, the two artists drew together for the last time in Ronciglione: Fragonard continued his journey back to Paris with the Abbé de Saint-Non, whereas Robert remained in Rome until 1765.



**Hubert Robert**

### ***Washerwomen at Ronciglione***

1761

Red chalk on laid paper

Valence, Musée de Valence – art et archéologie

The Ronciglione valley, located approximately fifty kilometres from Rome, offers an exceptional panorama. Robert accompanied Fragonard there on the latter's journey back to France. Working side by side, Fragonard produced a black chalk drawing (now in the British Museum) using the same perspective as Robert here. The village, apparently devoid of any human presence, overlooks a rugged, mineral landscape that is gradually being overrun by vegetation. In contrast, the repetitive movements of the washerwomen introduce an almost soothing rhythm.



**Jean-Honoré Fragonard**

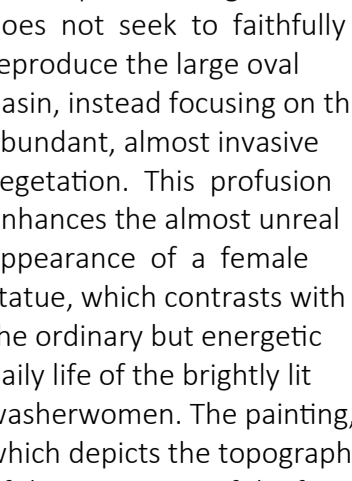
### ***View of the Serapeum at Hadrien's Villa***

Circa 1760

Red chalk and graphite on laid paper

Paris, Fondation Custodia

This red chalk drawing is a studio reconstruction by Fragonard based on his observations of the subject. It depicts the Serapeum – a spectacular banquet hall dedicated to the Egyptian god Serapis – which was built in Tivoli for Emperor Hadrian. Fragonard breaks free from archaeological reality to offer a bucolic vision thanks to the lush vegetation and the resting figures. Their small size accentuates the monumentality of the building. The artist was undoubtedly inspired by the frontal composition of Piranesi, the famous engraver who had his studio opposite the Académie de France in Rome.



**Jean-Honoré Fragonard**

### ***View Inspired by the Ovato Fountain in Tivoli***

Circa 1760

Red chalk and graphite on laid paper

Washington, The National Gallery of Art



**Jean-Honoré Fragonard**

### ***View Inspired by the Ovato Fountain in Tivoli***

Circa 1760

Oil on canvas

Private collection

Long attributed to Robert, the Washington red chalk drawing is now credited to Fragonard. Several clues confirm this attribution: the preparatory use of graphite, the central fold in the page, and the choice of subject. The Ovato Fountain is located in the gardens of Villa d'Este, an iconic sixteenth-century Italian palace. Fragonard does not seek to faithfully reproduce the large oval basin, instead focusing on the abundant, almost invasive vegetation. This profusion enhances the almost unreal appearance of a female statue, which contrasts with the ordinary but energetic daily life of the brightly lit washerwomen. The painting, which depicts the topography of the site, is one of the first views of gardens produced by Fragonard. Robert was certainly its first owner.