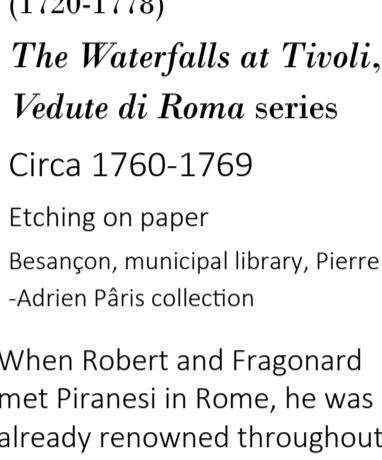


Memories of Italy and travel in Holland

Upon returning to Paris in 1765, Robert began producing numerous depictions of ruins, in which destructive forces of nature embodied the passage of time. At the Salon, an annual exhibition held at the Louvre Palace, he regularly presented views inspired by Tivoli, which he signed and dated, claiming his place in the history of landscape painting. He met with immediate success and commissions flooded in. However, Robert offered variations tailored to each client and destination: he adjusted the formats, emphasised the spectacular or idyllic nature of the site, whilst introducing visual references borrowed from masters such as Claude Gellée, known as Le Lorrain (c. 1600-1682), and his friend Joseph Vernet.

Fragonard's career took an unexpected turn when he withdrew from the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture and turned away from history painting, which was considered to be the most prestigious genre. In 1773, he accompanied the financier Jacques Onésyme Bergeret (1715–1785) to Flanders and Holland. There he discovered the landscapes and light of the North and deepened his knowledge of the work of Jacob van Ruisdael, whose paintings are characterised by a sober palette and attention to atmospheric effects and the monumental presence of trees. The experience nourished Fragonard's work, and he produced more than forty landscapes inspired by seventeenth-century Dutch painting. He was the only artist in France whose landscapes sold for as much as those of the Dutch masters during his lifetime.



Giovanni Battista Piranesi, (1720-1778)

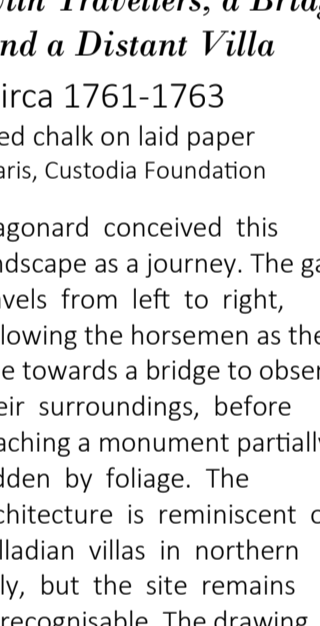
The Waterfalls at Tivoli, Vedute di Roma series

Circa 1760-1769

Etching on paper

Besançon, municipal library, Pierre-Adrien Pâris collection

When Robert and Fragonard met Piranesi in Rome, he was already renowned throughout Europe for the virtuosity of his etchings. The *Vedute di Roma* series, from which this plate is taken, was one of his major projects, begun in the late 1740s. Piranesi went beyond the topographical precision of the locations to deliver a monumental and dramatised vision of the buildings. Here, the violent contrasts of light and shade created by the depth of the black ink on the whiteness of the paper combine to represent a grandiose and powerful nature, which Robert sought to translate into painting.



Hubert Robert

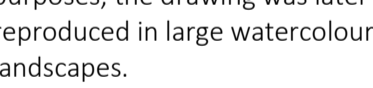
The Cascatelles of Tivoli

Circa 1777

Oil on canvas

Paris, Galerie Éric Coatalem

The landscapes inspired by Tivoli reawakened memories of visits, both for Robert and his clients. Thanks to its large size and vertical format, this painting, exhibited at the Salon of 1777, is one of the artist's most ambitious views of Tivoli. Influenced by Piranesi's etchings, Robert uses a network of thick white strokes to represent the fragmentation of the falling water. The contrast between the power of the waterfall, the speed at which it crashes onto the jagged rocks, and the smallness of the buildings, which are inexorably turning into ruins, creates a spectacular scene.



Jean-Honoré Fragonard

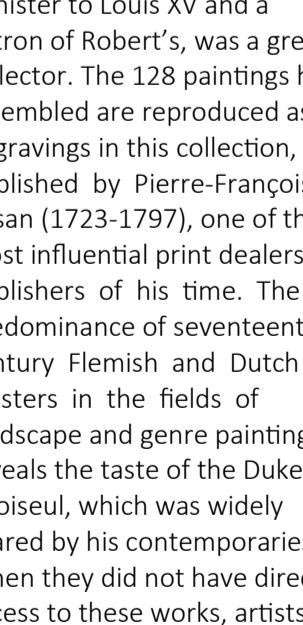
A Wooded Landscape with Travellers, a Bridge and a Distant Villa

Circa 1761-1763

Red chalk on laid paper

Paris, Custodia Foundation

Fragonard conceived this landscape as a journey. The gaze travels from left to right, following the horsemen as they ride towards a bridge to observe their surroundings, before reaching a monument partially hidden by foliage. The architecture is reminiscent of Palladian villas in northern Italy, but the site remains unrecognisable. The drawing, with its recomposed subject executed from memory during or just after his return to France in 1761, symbolises the physical experience of the Grand Tour.



Hubert Robert

Boy Lying Under a Tree

Circa 1770-1780

Counterproof in red chalk on laid paper

Besançon, municipal library, Pierre-Adrien Pâris collection

The Besançon counterproof, an inverted reproduction of the work, is one of the few remaining representations of trees by Robert. It is an interpretation based on one of Jacob van Ruisdael's rare etchings (opposite). Robert retains the monumentality of the motif, accentuated by its position in the foreground and the small scale of the figures. Perhaps initially conceived for educational purposes, the drawing was later reproduced in large watercolour landscapes.



Balthasar Anton Dunker (1746-1807), after

Philips Wouwerman (1619-1668)

A Stream in Hilly Country

in *Recueil d'estampes gravées d'après les tableaux du cabinet de monseigneur le duc de Choiseul par les soins du Sr Basan*

1771

Plate 19

Paris, library of the Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Jacques Doucet collections, Document looted during the Second World War, acquired by the Bibliothèque centrale des musées nationaux (BCMN) through purchase from the Domaines in 1951.

Étienne-François de Choiseul, minister to Louis XV and a patron of Robert's, was a great collector. The 128 paintings he assembled are reproduced as engravings in this collection, published by Pierre-François Basan (1723-1797), one of the most influential print dealers and publishers of his time. The predominance of seventeenth-century Flemish and Dutch masters in the fields of landscape and genre painting reveals the taste of the Duke of Choiseul, which was widely shared by his contemporaries. When they did not have direct access to these works, artists drew on repertoires of forms in this type of collection.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard

The Rock

Circa 1780

Oil on canvas

Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts

This painting reflects Fragonard's admiration for seventeenth-century Dutch painting, which was highly prized by collectors in the second half of the following century. The motifs of the rock and the loaded mule are directly inspired by an engraving by Jacob Lutma (1624?-1654) after Jan Both (1618-1652), shown opposite. Fragonard embraces the principle of minimal narration to give pride of place to nature, which he recomposes to his taste. All of the elements trees, clouds, animals and people seem to be part of the same movement.