

FRANK PARTRIDGE

Abraham-Louis-Rodolphe Ducros **View of a Villa beside the cascades at Tivoli, with Figures.**

Circa 1785

26 x 38.5 in (67 x 98 cm)

Pen and grey ink and watercolour, heightened with white, red and blue bodycolour, on cardboard; bears number in red chalk verso: 5.

Abraham-Louis-Rodolphe Ducros was a Swiss painter, born in Moudon, Switzerland, on 21 July 1748, (he died Lausanne, 18 Feb 1810). From 1769 to 1771 he studied in Geneva at the private academy of Nicolas Henri Joseph Fassin. After a journey to Flanders he returned to Geneva, where he sketched and painted in watercolours in the countryside and became fascinated by the analysis and recording of natural phenomena. In 1776 he travelled to Rome and in 1778 found employment as a specialist in topographical landscapes with Nicolas ten Hove, a Dutch antiquary who was embarking on a journey through southern Italy, Sicily and Malta. Among the watercolour drawings that Ducros produced on that expedition are the Temple of Hercules at Agrigento (Amsterdam, Rijksmus.) and a View of the Harbour at Pozzuoli near Naples (U. Manchester, Whitworth A.G.). On his return to Rome in 1779 he established a business with the engraver Giovanni Battista Volpato, producing large quantities of souvenir views of Rome for tourists. A work of that period is the watercolour Temple of Peace (1779; New Haven, CT, Yale Cent. Brit. A.). In the following year Ducros and Volpato published their first series of prints, *Vues de Rome et de ses environs* (Rome, 1780). Their collaboration continued until 1789, but by 1782 Ducros was beginning to take on commissions for his own paintings. His first important commissions were for oil paintings, such as those commemorating the visit to Italy in 1782 of Grand Duke Paul Romanov: the Grand Duke Paul and the Grand Duchess Maria at Tivoli and the Grand Duke Paul and his Suite at the Forum (both St Petersburg, Peter & Paul Fortress). In 1782 Ducros painted Pius VI Visiting the Drainage Works at the Pontine Marshes (St Petersburg, Peter & Paul Fortress) and in 1786 produced another version of the same event (Rome, Pal. Braschi). By 1783 he had probably already begun to paint the large-scale watercolours that made his name. In 1786 he met Sir Richard Colt Hoare, who became his most important patron and bought 13 landscapes between 1786 and 1793. These included View at Tivoli and the Arch of Constantine (both Stourhead, Wilts, NT). In 1793 Ducros left Rome for Naples and in 1800 travelled to Malta, where he painted a series of large views of Valletta (e.g. View of Grand Harbour, Valletta, Lausanne, Pal. Rumine; version, Valletta, N. Mus.). In 1807 he returned to Switzerland.