

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Antonio Joli

(Modena c. 1700 – 1777 Naples)

*The Palazzo Reale and  
Castel Nuovo*

oil on canvas

62.5 x 49.7 cm.;

24 5/8 x 19 5/8 in.

---

## Provenance

John Montagu, Lord Brudenell, Marquis of Monthermer (1735 - 1770);  
His sister Lady Elizabeth Montagu, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duchess of Buccleuch and Queensbury;  
By descent to the present Lord Montagu of Beaulieu.

---

## Literature

F. Bologna, G. Doria & F. Pannain, *Settecento Napolitano*, Turin 1962, pp. 16-19;  
J. Kerslake, *Mr Boswell*, exh. cat., London 1967, cat. no. 20;  
N. Spinosa, *Pittura napoletana del Settecento. Dal Rococò al Classicismo*, Naples 1987, p. 159, cat. no. 287;  
N. Spinosa and L. Di Mauro, *Vedute napoletane del Settecento*, Naples 1989, p. 193, no. 71;  
S. Cassani (ed.), *All'ombra del Vesuvio, Napoli nella veduta dal Quattrocento all'Ottocento*, exh. cat., Naples 1990, pp. 399-400, reproduced p. 178;

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

S. Cassani (ed.), *In the Shadow of Vesuvius: Views of Naples from Baroque to Romanticism*, exh. cat., Naples 1990, p. 125, reproduced p. 44;  
C. De Seta, *Napoli fra Rinascimento e Illuminismo*, Naples 1991, p. 242, ill. 32;  
L. Salerno, *I pittore di vedute in Italia 1580-1830*, Rome 1991, p. 255;  
N. Spinosa and L. Di Mauro, *Vedute napoletane del Settecento*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Naples 1993, no. 71;  
R. Middione, *Antonio Joli*, Soncino 1995, p. 84, no. 20, reproduced on the cover.

---

## Exhibited

Edinburgh, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, and London, National Portrait Gallery, *Mr Boswell*, 18 August to 16 September 1967 and 13 October to 30 November 1967 respectively;  
Naples, Castel Sant'Elmo, *All'ombra del Vesuvio, Napoli nella veduta dal Quattrocento all'Ottocento*, 12 May - 29 July 1990;  
London, Accademia Italiana delle Arti e delle Arti Applicate, *In the Shadow of Vesuvius: Views of Naples from Baroque to Romanticism*, 27 October - 27 November 1990.

---

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



LONDON

NEW YORK

MADRID

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

## Lent by courtesy of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu

This wonderfully luminous painting, arguably Joli's masterpiece, is part of a series of views of Naples and its environs which were commissioned by Lord Brudenell, the eldest son of the Earl of Cardigan and Lady Mary Montagu, during his stay in the city on his unusually extensive nine-year Grand Tour (1751-1760). Brudenell did not set out on his Grand Tour until 1751, but it has been suggested<sup>1</sup> that he may have met Joli while the artist was in London in the 1740s when Joli executed decorative schemes for the interiors of Richmond House, which adjoined Montagu House on the banks of the Thames as can be seen in a famous view painting by Canaletto now at Goodwood House. Certainly Joli, who was occasionally referred to as the Neapolitan Canaletto, must have benefited both artistically and in terms of attracting commissions from the presence in London of the great Venetian *vedutista*. In 1751 Lord Brudenell was in Paris with his tutor Henry Lyte; he spent three years there engaging the services of a drawing master and taking 'a course of Experimental Philosophy with the Abbé Nollet together with my Lord Dartmouth and my Lord North', but showed 'remarkable perseverance in not talking French' which, given the length of his residence in France, was a cause of exasperation to his tutor. In 1754 they arrived in Genoa, coincidentally the same year that Joli left England to return to Italy, and by 1756, having visited Rome to witness the Pope's Easter Blessing, Brudenell moved rapidly on to Naples and Sicily where he was to spend the best part of two years, punctuated by visits to Malta and Calabria. He finally returned - with great reluctance - to England via Rome, where he purchased antiquities from the dealer Thomas Jenkins and was painted in 1758 by both Mengs and Batoni before arriving in Venice in late 1760; his final stop before travelling back home. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu observed him in Venice in December of that year and described him as 'appearing to be in very bad health and extreme [sic] unwilling to return to England... He seems highly dispos'd to, if not actually fallen into, a Consumption'. Lady Mary's words proved prophetic and, although he was to live for another ten years, it is likely that the return to England may have hastened his early death from tuberculosis. The painting of Venice by Joli now at Palace House, Beaulieu, was probably Brudenell's last commission from the artist.

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

Although Rome was the traditional Mecca of the grand tourists, Brudenell seems to have had far more enthusiasm for Naples than for the Eternal City. This was another source of frustration to his tutor, Henry Lyte, who complained in April 1757 that 'it would have been both entertaining and improving to my Lord Brudenell, had he pass'd the last three months in Rome, instead of continuing so long in this part of the world, but his Lordship is of a different opinion'. Significantly perhaps, there are no views of Rome among the group of paintings that he commissioned from Joli. Instead, Brudenell devoted his time and energies to exploring parts of Italy within the kingdom of Naples, which were not so often visited by the grand tourists commissioning Joli to record them for him. He was one of the first British grand tourists to visit the Greek Temples at Paestum, then more or less *terra incognita*, which later were to inspire Goethe and J R Cozens. The views of the temples which Joli was commissioned to record in 1756 (*Plain of Paestum with the Temples*, His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, Bowhill, Selkirk) are the earliest known topographical paintings of Paestum and can be seen as of pioneering importance in the rediscovery of Greece, predating by six years the publication of Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*. Brudenell also visited the Greek temples at Agrigento as well as Palermo and the Straits of Messina, and these were also memorialized by Joli in the series of views now at Beaulieu.

The present magnificent view of the Royal Palace and Castle Nuovo relates to the important group of views commissioned by Lord Brudenell from the artist between 1756 and 1758, now divided between Beaulieu, Bowhill and various private collections, although, as is suggested below, this picture may have been completed slightly later than the other paintings in this group. Although the city itself had inspired topographical artists since the seventeenth century, Joli's mode of depiction went beyond what had been achieved by the likes of Vanvitelli by portraying the city seen from the inside, in a new, more intimate style, giving us both precise and sometimes unique records of its changing cityscape, and revealing glimpses of contemporary society which owe much to the example of his great contemporary, Canaletto. Among this group, the present picture stands out - according to Roberto Middione - as 'one of the most original views of the city ever painted.'<sup>2</sup> Framing the composition on either side are the two principal seats of power: the Castelnuovo to the left and the Royal Palace to the right, and these monumental buildings serve as a counterpart to

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

the charmingly informal figures in the foreground, which include washerwoman hanging out their laundry on the railings, and gardeners tending to the fruit trees in the moat, while on the roof of the palace itself, builders are at work grinding mortar and winching up stone from the ground below. Despite the apparent naturalism and artlessness of the scene, the painting is very carefully composed rather like a stage set, leading the eye out between the wings of the two buildings to the beautiful landscape of the Bay of Naples beyond and this perhaps reflects Joli's early training as a scenographic painter. From 1762 he was actively employed painting scenery for the San Carlo theatre and all the Beaulieu paintings reveal his skill in composing *mises en scene*.

The Palazzo Reale was first built between 1600 and 1602, commissioned by the Viceroy Ferrente di Castro to designs by Domenico Fontana. In 1734, with the arrival of Charles III of Spain in Naples, the palace became the royal residence of the Bourbons and was remodelled internally: a new wing was added, initiated by King Ferdinand I of the Two Sicilies. Given that this campaign of building, directed by the architect Luigi Vanvitelli, son of the artist, was not completed until 1762 and that work was evidently still in progress at the time of our picture's execution, it has been suggested<sup>3</sup> that Joli painted it later than the other Neapolitan views in the series and did not complete the picture until after Brudenell's return to England in early 1761, providing a fitting souvenir of a city which meant so much to him.<sup>4</sup> Another painting included in the present exhibition, in the same series by Joli, shows the main front of the Palazzo Reale and the Largo di Palazzo with a Cucagna.

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

---

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> F. Russell in G. Jackson-Stops (ed.), *Treasure Houses of Britain. Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting*, exh. cat., Washington 1985, p. 256, no. 175.

<sup>2</sup> R. Middione, *Antonio Joli*, Soncino 1995, p. 84, no. 20, reproduced on the cover.

<sup>3</sup> Middione, *loc.cit.*