

THOMAS JONES  
(1742 – 1803)

FIVE WORKS ON PAPER

KAREN TAYLOR FINE ART

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+44 (0)20 8743 9207

+44 (0)7881 581275

karen@karentaylorfineart.com

www.karentaylorfineart.com

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Frontispiece illustration: *Near Naples with a mule on a track, catalogue no. 5*

## FOREWORD

It is a rare pleasure and honour to be entrusted with the sale of five works on paper by Thomas Jones, now recognized as one of the most innovative of all eighteenth-century British artists. This exceptional group which spans his journey through Italy to Rome, his exploration of the Roman Campagna and his stay in Naples encapsulates the inspiration he first yearned for and then found in Italy.

The timeless quality of Jones's work and its reemergence from relative obscurity is eloquently explored by Jane Munro in her essay.

This group of pictures has remained in his family until now and has never before been offered on the market. This is a unique opportunity to acquire an exhibited and published work by Thomas Jones of

exquisite beauty with an unbroken provenance which can be traced back to the artist.

My thanks to Jane Munro for agreeing to contribute an essay to the catalogue and for her support for the project. I am also grateful to Maria Vilancour Baker, Mark Dalton, Francesca Kaes, Stuart Sanderson, Greg Smith, Richard Whatling and Rollo Wakeley. My thanks also to the institutions who permitted me to illustrate comparative works by Jones in the catalogue. As ever Oliver and Dominic Brind have provided their support in innumerable ways, for which I am truly grateful.

Karen Taylor

## 'THAT CLOUD OF OBSCURITY'

JANE MUNRO

On a warm summer's day in 1782, 'rambling' along a picturesque road behind the Ospedale San Gennaro in Naples, Thomas Jones not for the first time bemoaned the difficulty of making his name as an artist and of securing lucrative patronage. But he sensed a change was in the air: thanks to the support of a fellow painter his fortunes seemed to be on the turn; at last he was beginning 'to emerge a little from that Cloud of Obscurity in which I had been so long enveloped'.<sup>1</sup> We can only imagine the gratification that Jones would have felt at confronting his posthumous reputation as one of the most significant and original landscape painters of the eighteenth century, albeit mingled with a degree of bewilderment on discovering that works he had once considered mere 'sketches' – unsellable, private affairs – had become avidly sought after by public institutions and private collectors worldwide.

Since the publication of Jones's engaging and informative *Memoirs* in 1948 and the appearance on the market in 1954 of a group of his remarkable watercolours and oil sketches, appreciation of his work has not ceased to grow. A monographic exhibition in 1970 first brought his work to wider public attention, while a generation later another major show with an associated scholarly publication contextualised his art alongside British and European contemporaries working in Italy and rigorously examined the materials and techniques he adopted, in part considering his status as a semi-amateur artist.<sup>2</sup> More recent articles have provided a wider consideration of

his life and works beyond art historical accounts, from studies examining the inflexion of his religious beliefs on one of his most iconic oil sketches, *A Wall in Naples* (fig. 1),<sup>3</sup> to an analysis of the Neapolitan kitchen consumables listed in Jones's Italian account book from a material culture perspective, a 'time capsule' offering an exceptional insight into a Grand Tour household.<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 1  
Thomas Jones, *A Wall in Naples*, National Gallery, London

Beyond these, Jones has featured prominently in numerous publications and exhibitions devoted to eighteenth-century British art and especially to the history of the oil sketch. The fundamental contribution of mid-twentieth century connoisseurs, collectors and dealers to the history and appreciation of the oil sketch – notably John and Charlotte Gere – has been fully recognised in recent years. Their pioneering work, along with the research and advocacy of a number of passionate art historians and dealers over subsequent decades has been transformative, creating a solid foundation on which a later generation of enthusiastic aficionados continue to build in exciting ways, bringing legions of lesser-known artists to our attention and further highlighting the ubiquity of the practice of painting from nature throughout the nineteenth century. While scholars have routinely recognised art-historical precedent in painting directly from nature in oils – citing artists such as François Desportes (1661-1743), Carle-Joseph Vernet (1758-1836) and Jones's own master, Richard Wilson (1713/1714-1782), among others – Jones, along with the French painter Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes (1750-1819), has more often than not been taken as point of departure in accounts devoted to the practice of *plein air* painting. Strikingly, his oil sketches have elicited some of the most lyrical, sensual and at times rhapsodic prose from painters, art historians, and in one case a poet laureate, all of whom have grappled to find words to evoke the magical brilliance of an art that is paradoxically often described as 'understated'.<sup>5</sup>

While it would hardly have been Jones's ambition to become the 'poster boy' for the oil sketch that he is today, his luscious and refined paint handling has nonetheless proved irresistible to designers who understandably relish enlarging excerpts from sketches often no

bigger than a postcard – these 'great microcosms of painting'<sup>6</sup> – across book covers, page spreads and posters, inciting us to lose ourselves in their ravishing detail. In the seventy-five years since he first emerged into public consciousness, Jones has been episodically 'rediscovered', his work 'reappraised' and 'reevaluated' by successive generations [see bibliography], testimony to the freshness, originality and accessibility of his extraordinary art.

Early in his career, not long out of a two-year apprenticeship (1763-65), with the Welsh painter Richard Wilson, Jones suffered the indignity of having his prize-winning landscape painting described as a 'd—d snuff-Coloured Picture', albeit admitting that it was 'to be sure a most flaring Sun Set'.<sup>7</sup> In his *Memoirs*, Jones barely suppresses his satisfaction at the subsequent fading of the career the fellow artist who had slighted his performance, then reduced to working in the 'Oblivious, but useful Situation as a Mechanick in one of Our English Dock-yards',<sup>8</sup> but the latter's criticism is all the more striking given the aspects of Jones's work that is now most valued: its clarity and luminosity. Although these qualities are largely missing from his more ambitious exhibition pictures, the masterly orchestration of light and shadow is, as the current group of works amply testifies, one of the most marked characteristics of both his watercolours and what Jones termed his 'Studies in Oil on thick primed paper – after Nature'.<sup>9</sup> As a student, Jones was discouraged by his master from executing 'tinted Drawings' (i.e. using ink/watercolour washes) on the grounds that the 'flutter of Colours' would 'hurt the Eye for fine Colouring';<sup>10</sup> instead, like Wilson, he initially worked in black and white chalks and won more than one prize for his efforts in the medium at public exhibitions.



Fig. 2, Thomas Jones,  
***Houses on the road from Rome to Civita Castellana***

In Italy, however, he routinely applied colour washes to sketches made on his 'perambulations' around the Italian countryside, often 'touching' them indoors on rainy days or even several years later after his return to Wales, as is the case with his view of *Houses on the road from Rome to Civita Castellana* (fig. 2).<sup>11</sup>

Depending on the tone of the paper used, water-colour achieves an effect of luminosity through the use of a transparent pigment wash on a white paper ground, and Peter Bower has comprehensively demonstrated the care which Jones took to source his papers (and other materials) in both Italy and the UK.<sup>12</sup> But as Kate Lowry has pointed out, Jones achieved a similar clarity and high tone in his oil sketches by using varyingly coloured primed grounds on a paper support which absorbed the linseed oil binder, so preventing the painting from yellowing.<sup>13</sup> As *plein air* painters discovered, working in oil paint in the field meant dealing with a shiny medium that emitted a distracting glare, an inconvenience that could be counteracted by using an umbrella or parasol, or by finding a shady spot in which to work (fig. 3).

Another solution adopted by artists – including Jones in many of his oil sketches of 'Scenes & Objects'<sup>14</sup> in Naples – was to paint the outside world from an interior, often through a window, which had the additional advantage of creating a naturally occurring compositional framing device, almost as if seen

through a camera obscura. Like many of these, Jones's striking view near Naples (cat. no. 5) was begun out-of-doors but very likely completed in the studio, out of the heat of the scorching sun that has so evidently drained the exhausted mule.



Nothing is lost in the process. Jones brilliantly preserves the enveloping light and depth of cast shadow recorded on the spot: man and animal are part of, but dwarfed by, the majestic grandeur of nature.

For all the unquestionable originality of Jones's work, it has perhaps inevitably been closely associated with that of another near-contemporary and advocate of painting from nature, the French artist Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, who made numerous *plein air* sketches in Italy during these same years. John Gere first drew attention to similarities between the technique and 'spirit' of the two men's work in 1959,<sup>15</sup> although any evidence that they met or even corresponded has failed to emerge, and it has been reasonably argued that attempts to try to align their interests fail to recognise key differences between their ambitions and approaches.<sup>16</sup> The scathing remarks Jones makes about some of the French artists whom he met on his travels in Italy and their often coarse and arrogant behaviour suggests that he may not have been predisposed to cultivate a friendship among a nation of artists whose 'mark'd ... Character' he described as 'distinct from the rest of mankind as the Chinese',<sup>17</sup> far less to accept their advice.

It is worth remembering, too, that Jones was already a seasoned *plein air* practitioner by the time he arrived in Italy, having made oil sketches in and around his native Pencerrig in Wales, and as such was more advanced than the student audience to whom Valenciennes directed his 'reflections and advice'. All the same, given the precision with which Valenciennes describes techniques of *plein air* oil painting in his influential treatise on landscape painting, *Elémens*



Fig. 3 André Giroux (1801-1879)  
***Forest Interior with a Painter***  
National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

*perspective pratique, à l'usage des artistes ...*, published in 1799-1800 but almost certainly based on conversations he had in Italy, it is hard to avoid speculating as to how Jones might have responded to the older painter's instructions. In the main, these take the form of a series of clearly articulated 'dos' and (mostly) 'don't's'. It was all too easy for the uninitiated to run into difficulties when painting outside controlled studio light, Valenciennes wrote.

One of the biggest challenges was recording the ever-changing light from the sun and the shifting shapes and depth of shadows caused by the earth as it spun on its axis throughout the day: as a consequence, spending an entire day under such variable conditions was destined to failure and could only be replete with ‘errors and lies against nature’.<sup>18</sup> Nor was the method of returning to paint the same spot at the same time of day for shorter periods of time (two hours) any more productive, since the weather and so the light were likely to change from day to day. Instead, Valenciennes advised painters to begin with the sky and work towards the foreground so as to ensure a harmonic atmospheric effect throughout. Crucially, no session should last for more than two hours, or thirty minutes when endeavouring to capture the fugitive effects at sunrise or sunset: such hastily-executed ‘maquettes’ made it impossible to include any degree of detail, Valenciennes wrote, but that was not the objective;<sup>19</sup> and in Jones’s case, like many other painters ‘after Nature’, it did not preclude later studio revisions.

Whatever the differences in their painting techniques and intentions, one thing united the two artists: a shared sensitivity to the natural world. Both Jones and Valenciennes were acute and informed observers of natural phenomena. For his part, Valenciennes had a keen interest in the natural sciences, fuelling, for example, his experience of volcanic eruptions, and by the end of his life he had assembled notable collections of shells, insects, stuffed rare birds and a ‘fine cabinet of minerals’.<sup>20</sup> A landowner’s son, Jones found his eye was drawn to all sorts of aspects of the natural world: its geology, vegetation, fauna, and even the skies above, sighting Venus through a telescope in London in 1769 and seven years later noting conver-

sations with astrologists in the Observatory in Turin.<sup>21</sup> This wide-ranging curiosity would certainly have qualified Jones as one of the painters Valenciennes qualified as ‘*Artistes qui ont étudié la Nature*’ (‘artists who have studied nature’), the implication being that other painters had not, resting comfortably in the artifice of their art.<sup>22</sup>

No sooner had he crossed the Channel in 1767, making his way to Italy through France and Switzerland, than Jones began scrupulously to note the characteristics of the terrain through which he passed. Inevitably, perhaps, his encounter with dramatic mountain scenery proved especially thrilling and his delight – ‘rapture’ – at getting among ‘Rocks, precipices and Picturesque Mountains’ at the foot of the Apennines is palpable,<sup>23</sup> just as a month later he was awestruck by the geological formations at Gensano, a site of exceptional interest to ‘Scholar, naturalist, Antiquarian and Artist’, Jones noted, which spoke to him of the ‘tremendous Convulsions of nature in the remotest Ages’.<sup>24</sup> But Jones also carefully recorded the less spectacular details of the countryside through which he travelled: the groves, plantations and avenues of tree species – plane, mulberry, oak, chestnut, willows, poplars, pine, ilex, walnuts, cork, cypress, olives; the rocks and boulders that covered the terrain, and especially the varying textures and qualities of soil and the crops it supported (or not). On the south side of the ‘chiefly calcareous’ Apennines, the soil was of so ‘loose & Sandy texture’, Jones observed, that it was virtually devoid of vegetation,<sup>25</sup> whereas a few days earlier at Pietramala, en route from Bologna to Florence (cat. no. 1), the soil had been ‘gravelly’, its surface scattered with stones that were ‘hard & flinty’.<sup>26</sup>



It was this same region in northern Tuscany that Jones passed by an extinguished volcano, saw ‘several Strata of fossil Shells’ and also had a close encounter with the native fauna, as a dinner conversation on the ‘Reptiles of Italy’ was interrupted by spotting ‘a large Scorpion sticking against the Wall’ near their table.<sup>27</sup> The colours of rocks, boulders, ravines and cliff faces in particular caught Jones’s attention: ‘grey - White Alabaster & black Slate’ at Mount Cenis in Savoie; soil that was ‘different shades of Yellow’ when leaving Velletri, and ‘friable, cream Color’d Stone about Naples calle’d Tuffa’.<sup>28</sup>

But nothing on his travels quite matched Tivoli for its coloristic splendour; there, around the famous waterfall, ‘the perpendicular & hanging Sides admit of no vegetation & you discover the naked Rock - the Eye is charmed with the most beautiful variegated Tints White, Grey, Red & Yellow - opposing or blending their different Dyes together’.<sup>29</sup> One type of rock, peperino, seen in the Colli Albani volcanic district near Rome, especially fascinated him, prompting a quasi-geological disquisition in his *Memoirs*. A form of brown or grey volcanic tuff containing fragments of basalt, limestone and various minerals, peperino rock draws its name, as Jones surmised, from its resemblance to ground pepper, and was especially suitable as a building material since it, ‘yields to the Chissel [sic]’ & [is] consequently much us’d in masonry as jambs, Sills & lintels of Doors & Windows in staircases &c’,<sup>30</sup> just as ‘Tivertine’ (travertine) stone found near Tivoli was used in many of the great public buildings in Rome, he wrote.<sup>31</sup>

Jones was modest about his knowledge of natural history,<sup>32</sup> but was nevertheless intensely observant of the world around him and his response to the ‘fabricks’ of different sorts that he saw and painted around Italy – walls, barns, bridges, rooftops and rural dwellings



Fig. 4 Thomas Jones,  
*Porta Cavalleggeri, Rome*

as well as its grand historic architecture and monuments of antiquity – was clearly underpinned by the attention he paid to the materials from which they were constructed. When painting houses on the road from Rome to Civita Castellana (cat. no. 4), for example, he attentively distinguishes the different colours of stone from which they are built and the precarious looking cracks in the walls of the house on the hill. Similarly, in his oil sketch formally described as the ‘Porta Cavalleggeri’ (fig. 4), it is perhaps telling that Jones first omits, then mis-remembers, the specific gateway to Rome he has represented, perhaps considering the wall itself, with its crumbling, stained surface, to have been of at least equivalent pictorial and compositional significance.

All evidence suggests that Jones was a gregarious man who during his time in Italy enjoyed dinners, conversations, outings with friends and family and sketching expeditions with fellow painters, in particular William Pars, John Robert ('little') Cozens and Giovanni Lusieri ('Don Titta'). But his *Memoirs* are also replete with references to moments spent in solitude, walking around Italian cities alone before breakfast or seeking out sketching terrain that was 'a little out of the beaten track of the ... perambulating painters',<sup>33</sup> which would have given him the time and space to commune with nature by himself. The human figure in his remarkable oil sketch of a sun-drenched road near Naples (cat. no. 5) would suggest that in this case at least, Jones was accompanied on his travels, if only by a muleteer; remove it from the composition, and the 'subject' is essentially the play of light and shadow over rocks and vegetation. Perched on a rocky outcrop and seen from behind, the man assumes a commanding position against the sky, transforming the picture and its mood. As he stares into a vast distant horizon, our imagination ranges with his at the infinity that lays itself out at his feet: where his thoughts take him we can only guess ... Yet his shadowy silhouette also reminds us of an absence: that of the painter painting the scene. Might we even imagine that the figure is Jones himself, or at least an avatar of his solitude-seeking persona? Whether we look with him or at him, we sense his presence, as he turns his back on obscurity and looks towards the light.



Giuseppe Marchi (c. 1735 -1808)

**Thomas Jones, 1768**

National Museums & Galleries of Wales

## ENDNOTES

1. *Memoirs*, July 22 1782, p. 133. The fellow-painter was his friend Giovanni Battista Lusieri (1755-1821).
2. Sumner and Smith, *An Artist Rediscovered*.
3. Tomlinson, 2017.
4. Calarescu, 2020.
5. Andrew Motion 'A Wall in Naples' <https://journals.library.wales/view/1191402/1198704/55#?xy-wh=-2553%2C-494%2C7401%2C3838> ] and see Sumner, *An Artist Rediscovered*, pp.11 and 18.
6. Gowing, 1985, p. 47.
7. *Memoirs*, 1767, p. 12.
8. *ibid*, 1767, p. 13.
9. *ibid*, 1774, p. 38.
10. *ibid*, 1763, p.10.
11. Smith, *An Artist Rediscovered*, p. 84.
12. Bower, *ibid*, pp. 101-107.
13. Lowry, *ibid*, p. 98.
14. *Memoirs*, December 1782, p. 118.
15. Gere, 1959, p. 93.
16. Anna Ottani Cavina, cited Riopelle, *An Artist Rediscovered*, p. 59.
17. *Memoirs*, 1776, p. 53.
18. *Elémens*, 1799-1800, p.406.
19. *Maquettes faites à la hâte*, *ibid*, pp. 405, 407.
20. Munro, *True to Nature*, p. 128.
21. *Memoirs*, 1769, p. 20; November 1776, p. 49.
22. *Elémens*, 1799-1800, p. 411.
23. *Memoirs*, November 1776, p. 50.
24. *ibid*, 12 December 1776, p. 56.
25. *ibid*, 24 November 1776, p. 52.
26. *ibid*, p.50.
27. *ibid*.
28. *ibid*, 4 November 1776, p. 46; 13 September 1778, p. 77; 23 May 1777, p. 61.
29. *ibid*, November 1777, p. 67.
30. *ibid*, May 1777, p. 60.
31. *ibid*, May 1777, p. 61.
32. 'These are the Ideas that have always occur'd upon a Survey of this District without attempting a Natural history or geographical disquisition' *Memoirs*, May 1777, p. 61.
33. *ibid*, May 1777, pp. 58-59.

## A BRIEF LIFE OF THOMAS JONES

Thomas Jones was born at Trefonnen (Trevonen) near Llandrindod in Radnorshire in 1742. From 1750 he was brought up at Pencerrig, near Builth Wells, a house and estate inherited by his mother Hannah. His informative *Memoirs* record his early passion for fine art from boyhood, 'My greatest amusement was in the looking at Prints and Pictures - such exquisite Pleasure, indeed, have I often felt in contemplating a piece which struck my fancy at that time - that the finest works of Art have never been able since, to excite in me similar feelings' (*Memoirs*, pp. 4 - 5).

Thomas's mother's family, the Hopes of Llandrindod Hall, were substantial landowners. Llandrindod was a small but fashionable spa, where the Jones's owned two of the springs and the Hopes leased out the hall as an hotel.

Thomas was educated by tutors at home and, together with his eldest brother John, at Christ College, Brecon from 1753-1758 and for a year from 1758-1759 at Llanfyllin, Montgomeryshire. His interest in art persisted throughout his school days and his father's support enabled him to buy drawing and painting materials and prints.

John Hope, his mother's unmarried uncle, who practised as a solicitor in London, decided to settle his estate on Hannah's second son, Thomas and paid for him to go to Oxford. At his request, Thomas went up to Jesus College, which had strong links with Wales, to enter the church. Thomas enjoyed the excesses of undergraduate life open to young men of means (*Memoirs*, p. 33).

However, in 1761 Jones's uncle died intestate and his future was again uncertain.

With some relief he abandoned plans for a career in the church and, in November 1761, Jones went to London and enrolled at William Shipley's drawing school. It was fairly unusual for someone of his social status to train as an artist. He recorded his experience of copying drawings in his *Memoirs*. He made friends with William Pars (1742-1782), who assisted his brother Henry who ran Shipley's, to whom he remained close throughout his life. Jones graduated to drawing casts after the Antique in the Duke of Richmond's sculpture gallery. In October 1762 he joined the St Martin's Lane Academy to study life drawing together with established artists as well as fellow students.

Having initially decided to specialise in portraiture, in March 1763 Jones settled on landscape painting and persuaded fellow Welshman Richard Wilson (1713/1714-1782) to take him as an apprentice for two years for the payment of fifty guineas. This formative period for Jones sparked his desire to travel to Italy. For the first year he drew in black and white on coloured paper, largely from nature and copied Wilson's drawings, sketches and paintings. Wilson also used his assistants to do some of his preparatory work and he worked in front of them, as well as taking them on sketching expeditions outside London to paint from nature.

In March 1765 Jones left Wilson to establish a landscape practice. He was elected to the Society of Artists in 1766. Unfortunately, most of his drawings and studies from this period were destroyed by damp, having been stored in a cellar while he was in Italy, and there is little surviving work. He had started painting oil sketches from nature in autumn 1770 while visiting his cousin Rice James at Gadbridge in Buckinghamshire, 'made a number of Sketches from the little picturesque Bits round about, as far as St Alban's, and painted in Oil some studies of Trees &c after Nature', (*Memoirs*, p. 22). A small group of beautiful oils on paper of Pencerrig, dating from 1772 - 1776 survives.

Jones had long wanted to travel to Italy; 'a favourite project that had been in agitation for some Years, and on which my heart was fixed' (*Memoirs*, p. 37). This was heightened by his familiarity with the work of Richard Wilson, whose artistic success had been assured by the Italian scenes he painted on his return to England after six years in Rome in the 1750s. However, for years his trip to the continent had been thwarted by mounting debts and his parents' disapproval of the scheme and Jones did not leave until October 1776.



Thomas Jones, *Pencerrig*  
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Jones was greatly affected by the changing landscape and light as he travelled through France to Italy. He sketched avidly on his journey, making a pencil drawing of the characterful bridge nineteen miles or so on the road from Bologna to Florence on 19 November 1776.





Thomas Jones, *A Bridge near Florence*

After a brief stay in Florence, he arrived in Rome on 27 November. On his first morning he visited St Peter's and the gardens of the Villa Medici. Over the next fortnight Jones visited churches, ruins and palaces, sometimes in company, sometimes alone.

Jones remained in Rome for almost two years, his first lodgings near the Spanish Steps. He was interested in the excavations and took in many of the painting collections. He made friends within the British community of artists and patrons and soon became acquainted with

Francis Towne (1739-1816), John 'Warwick' Smith (1749-1831), Henry Tresham (1751-1814), John Robert Cozens (1752-1797) and was reunited with his old friend William Pars. This important group of artists feature frequently in his Memoirs. Jones's particular vision was apparent from the start, as he was drawn to unusual corners of the city and old walls such as that around the Porta de' Cavalleggeri not far from St Peter's, rather than the well-known sketching spots.

In his Memoirs, Jones refers to Wilson's influence when expressing his joy at travelling through Italy and exploring the Roman Campagna, noting, 'I can not help observing with what new and uncommon Sensations I was filled on my first traversing this beautiful and picturesque Country ... It appeared Magick Land - In fact I had copied so many Studies of that great Man, & my Old Master, Richard Wilson ... that I insensibly became familiarized with Italian Scenes, and enamoured of Italian forms' (*Memoirs*, p. 55). He made his first trip outside Rome to Frascati, Ariccia and Genzano with William Miller (1740-1810) and Robert Home (1752-1834) from 13th – 15th December, which was followed by visits to Tivoli, Lake Albano and Lake Nemi.

Jones divided his time between the city and its environs and went on sketching tours further afield. On 15th February 1777 on the road from Rome to Civita Castellana he drew the subjects of the two watercolours in the present collection, the first from above Ponte Mola near Ovid's Tomb, the second of houses along the road.



Thomas Jones, *In the Campagna, near Rome*

His next trip from 19th April to 24th May saw him based at Frascati and Genzano again, travelling with Henry Tresham and then William Pars and his wife. They sketched at Lake Albano and Lake Nemi. From 9th-16th November he returned to Tivoli.

While in Rome, Jones made many pencil sketches, watercolours and oil sketches and worked on larger oil paintings. He had some

success in attracting patrons from the English, German and Russian nobility. The most important of these was Frederick Augustus Hervey, 4th Earl of Bristol (1730-1803) and Bishop of Derry who bought five pictures from him. He also commissioned paintings from the artist and kept in touch while he was in Naples.

After two congenial years in Rome, Jones moved to Naples from September 1778 to January 1779 and again from May 1780 to August 1783. The artist had begun a relationship with Maria Moncke, a Danish widow who had converted to Catholicism, who worked as his maidservant. He decided to move south once he had no prospect of further commissions in Rome and those that he was working on were all views of Naples and its environs. Their first apartment was on the piazza opposite the Dogana del Sale and had a roof terrace. Jones and Maria were to live in Naples for three years and it was at this time he produced the highly acclaimed and original small-scale oil sketches which are viewed as an important contribution to the development of European *plein air* painting.

contribution to the development of European *plein air* painting.

Naples was then the largest city in Italy, the seat of the wealthy Bourbon court and home of Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803) the British ambassador and art collector and his first wife, Catherine Barlow, who was from Wales (she died in 1782). It was also rather cheaper than Rome, with fewer resident artists.

Jones's Memoirs are primarily concerned with his daily life in the city, but he records his visits to the surrounding countryside in greater detail where he sought out unfamiliar views and new places to draw.

In March 1781 Francis Towne paid a visit from Rome and 'I was able to conduct him to so many picturesque Scenes of my Own discovery, entirely out of the common road of occasional Visitors, either Cavaliers or Artists, from Rome' (*Memoirs*, p. 102). In April he recorded painting 'several Studies upon paper in oil' (p. 103) which he had started to paint from the balcony of his house opposite the Dogana del Sala from which he looked down upon the roofscape of Naples. He enjoyed further visits from William Pars and John Robert Cozens with whom he made sketching expeditions, and he formed a warm friendship with Giovanni Battista Lusieri (1755-1821), who introduced Jones to some of his patrons, and with the Austrian artist Michael Wuky (1739-1822).

Dating from this period is the beautiful *plein air* sketch of the sun-drenched road passing through the tufa, fringed with aloes and Indian figs and with a back view of an enigmatic figure on a rock communing with the landscape.

Towards the end of Jones's stay, he sold a large view of Vesuvius to Sir William Hamilton, who had allowed him to use his billiard room at the Palazzo Sessa as a studio from May to July 1783, before he returned home.

In August 1783 Jones, Maria and their two daughters set sail for Britain. At that point Maria went by the name of Mrs Jones, according to Joseph Farington (1742-1821), although the couple had not yet married. Jones struggled to revive his artistic career, but he had an



Thomas Jones, *Near Naples with a mule on a track*

income of £300 a year left to him by his father. In 1787 upon the death of his older brother, Thomas Jones became head of his family with a substantial income and estates in Wales. Thomas finally married Maria in 1789 in London at the request of his devout mother. The couple moved to Pencerrig, leaving their daughters in London initially, before introducing them to Radnorshire society.

Immediately after his return from Italy Jones evidently devoted considerable time to reworking his sketches, in both oil and water-colour, and to revising his Memoirs which record that within a year of his return he felt 'my professional career was at an end' (*Memoirs*, p. 141.)

His patron Sir William Hamilton was unable to help him in London. The watercolours and oils on paper he produced after his return were made for his own pleasure and he produced remarkable work in the studio which retained the spontaneity of a picture made on the spot.

With the inheritance of the Pencerrig estate he became financially independent and was able to paint 'for his own Amusement'. (*Memoirs*, p. 141). Greg Smith has noted that 'his best pictures were not produced to be sold' (*An Artist Rediscovered*, p. 86). When his friend the artist Francesco Renaldi (1755-1798) visited Pencerrig in 1797, he painted Jones as a painter, at his easel holding a palette, brushes and mahl stick.

The artist also took great interest in the improvement of his Welsh estates. In 1791, Jones became High Sheriff of Radnorshire and a magistrate the following year. His health declined from 1801. After his death in 1803, his body was carried from Pencerrig to Cae-bach chapel at Llandrindod Wells founded by his grandfather, to be buried in the family vault.



Francesco Renaldi,  
***Thomas Jones and his Family, 1797***  
National Museums & Galleries of Wales



## THE REDISCOVERY OF THOMAS JONES

The publication of Jones's *Memoirs* by the Walpole Society in 1946-1948, with their wealth of vivid detail about Richard Wilson and the anecdotal activities of artists visiting Italy, led to a resurgence of interest in Jones and his work. They were edited by Paul Oppé (1878-1957), the drawings collector and Deputy Director of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

In 1954, a descendant of Thomas Jones's sold a group of fifty or so of his oil sketches and watercolours at Christie's, London. Agnew's and Colnaghi bought many of the multiple lots and examples of Jones's work entered the collections of many British institutions, including the National Museum of Wales, the Ashmolean Museum, the Fitzwilliam Museum, the British Museum, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea. In 1993 the National Gallery, London, acquired Jones's small oil sketch *A Wall in Naples*, a little larger than a postcard, for one million pounds.

The first exhibitions of Jones's work were held at Marble Hill House, Twickenham and the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff in 1970, in which four of the works offered here for sale were included. In the 1970s and 1980s his work was included in many other exhibitions, including *Landscape in Britain c. 1750-1850*, Tate Gallery, London, 1973, *British Artists in Rome 1700-1800*, Kenwood House, London, 1974 and *Painting from Nature. The Tradition of Open-Air sketching from the 17th to 19th Centuries*, the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1980.

The Yale Center for British Art acquired many examples of Jones's work, which were subsequently included in an exhibition in 1981 entitled *Classic Ground. British Artists and the Landscape of Italy, 1740-1830*. In 1988 the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester put on *Travels in Italy 1776-1783*, based upon Jones's *Memoirs* which explored the British artistic community in Italy.

The Whitworth exhibition took interest in Jones to a new level and his work was included in important international shows, including *In the Light of Italy: Corot and Early Open-Air Painting*, the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1996; *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century* at the Tate Gallery, London, 1997; and *Paysages d'Italie. Les Peintres du Plein Air (1780-1830)*, Paris and Mantua, 2001.

Jones's place in the history of British landscape painting was further reinforced by the inclusion of his work in important surveys of collections of British art collected by Paul Oppé and John Gere (1921-1995), the Keeper of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Gere's collection of oils on paper, formed together with his wife Charlotte, is now on long term loan to the National Gallery, London.

The 2003-2004 bicentenary exhibition in Cardiff, Manchester and London cemented Jones's position as a great artist with an important place in the European tradition of *plein air* landscape painting.



## PROVENANCE

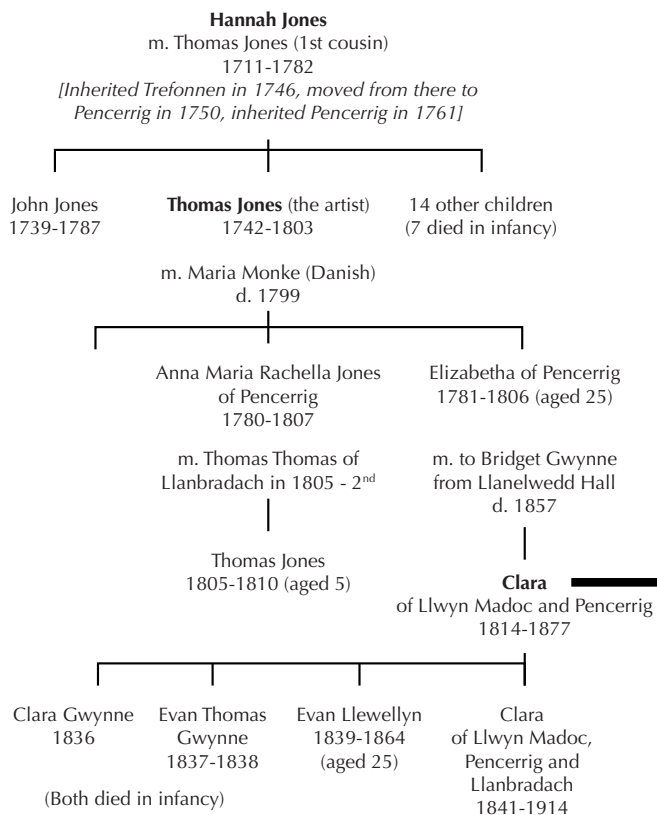
This important group of works by Thomas Jones has never been offered for sale and has remained in the possession of the artist's family until now.

On the artist's death, his works passed to his daughters Anna Maria (1780-1807) who inherited Pencerrig and the surrounding estates and her sister Elizabetha Francesca (1781-1806). At the age of twenty-four Anna Maria married a Glamorgan squire Thomas Thomas of Llanbradach (1778-1861). Upon her death in 1807 her husband inherited her estates and many of the paintings in the house. In 1811 he married again to Bridget Swynne of Llanelwedd Hall with whom he lived at Pencerrig. Their daughter Clara inherited the estates and the works by Jones, which had remained in the house. She married Henry Thomas of Llwynmadoc (1808-1863). Their daughter, also Clara, lived between Pencerrig and Llwynmadoc and is said to have put her piano on a cart which transported it between her two homes. She died in 1914 and is buried at Eglwys Oen Duw church, near Llwynmadoc which she and her mother had built.

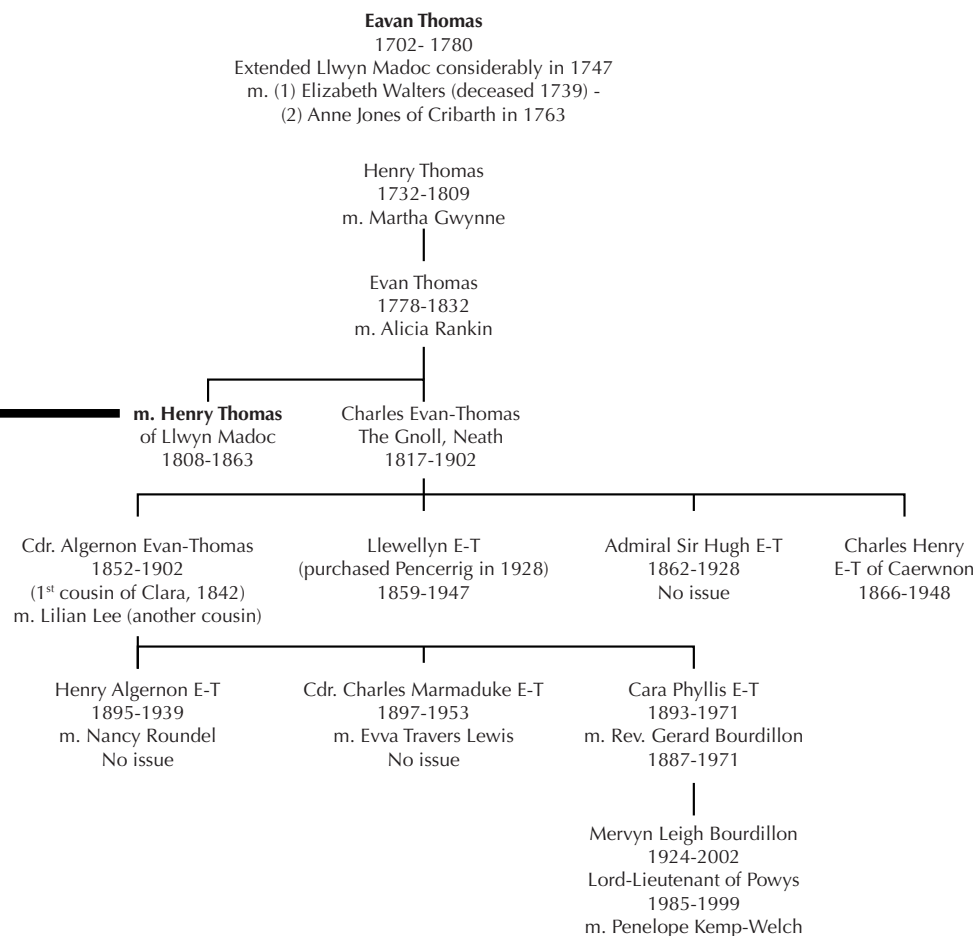
Clara never married and, on her death, Pencerrig passed to her maternal Llanbradach cousin, Katherine Ellen Griffiths (1866-1937) whose father George Thomas was the younger brother of Thomas Thomas of Llanbradach. Katherine married Henry Edzell Morgan Lindsay (1857-1935). In 1928, the Lindsays sold it to a nephew of Clara's father, Llewelyn Evan-Thomas, a successful shipping agent with Gellatly, Hankey & Co., who lived in Antwerp. Llewelyn died in 1947 leaving Pencerrig to his son Charles Lindsay Evan-Thomas. (Since then the house has changed hands several times and is currently in need of urgent repairs).

On Clara's death in 1914 Llwynmadoc and the paintings in this collection passed down the line of her first cousin Algernon Evan-Thomas (1852-1902) to Henry Algernon Evan-Thomas (1895-1939), and Charles Marmaduke Evan-Thomas (1897-1953) who both died without issue. Charles Evan-Thomas died unexpectedly in 1953 and the house and pictures were left in male entail to his nephew Mervyn Bourdillon (1924-2002), the father of the present owner, whose mother was an Evan-Thomas.

Hannah Jones was the niece of Jones Hope of Llandrindod Wells, 1st cousin of Anne Jones of Cribarth, who was the 2nd wife of Evan Thomas of Llwyn Madoc 1702-1780



## THE LLWYN MADOC FAMILY



Thomas Jones (1742 -1803)

***A Bridge near Florence***

Signed l.l.: *T. Jones*, inscribed l.r.: *noxxvi/xix miles from/FLORENCE/in the Road To BOLOGNA*, oil on paper over pencil laid down on canvas  
24.2 x 34.5 cm.; 9 ½ x 13 5/8 inches

**Provenance**

Anna Maria Thomas, née Jones (1780-1807);  
Thomas Thomas (1778-1861);  
Clara Thomas (1814-1877);  
Clara Thomas (1841-1914);  
Henry Algernon Evan-Thomas (1895-1939);  
Charles Marmaduke Evan-Thomas (1897-1953);  
Mervyn Bourdillon (1924-2002);  
By direct descent to the present owner.



## Literature

Ed. Ann Sumner and Greg Smith, *Thomas Jones (1742-1803) An Artist Rediscovered*, 2003, no. 68, ill. p. 172

## Exhibited

National Museum & Gallery, Cardiff, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 21 May – 10 August 2003, no. 68; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 22 August – 26 October 2003, no. 68; National Gallery, London, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 12 November 2003 – 15 February 2004, no. 68

Jones first sketched this bridge while travelling towards Rome at the beginning of his Italian journey, on 19 November 1776. He made the pencil drawing, nineteen miles or so from Florence, on a group of seventeen sheets which were later bound into his Neapolitan account book which he had purchased in Turin on 8 November. It is typical of the subjects which attracted him while in Italy, with its palpable sense of history. The vegetation cascades down over the top of the bridge under a blue Italian sky, the distant Apennines are captured through the arch and the small white church provides architectural interest.

He later returned to this drawing to make this beautiful oil painting on paper, to which he has added further figures on the single span bridge and women washing laundry on the riverbank. It is not a *plein air* landscape sketch, but rather a harmonious and considered small painting which captures the immediacy of an oil sketch with Jones's inimitable flair. It dates from the late 1770s or early 1780s.



### **19 Miles from Florence**

from "Thomas Jones' Italian Account Book," 1776,  
Powys County Archives, R/SOC/4/7.

The drawing and this oil exemplify Jones's liking for simple architectural structures with atmospheric weathering set in the Italian countryside which so inspired him as he travelled towards Rome. He focuses on the texture of the bridge and the different colours of the stone. The whitewashed church to the right of the composition provides a tonal contrast familiar from his oil sketches of buildings in Naples.

Jones's friend Francis Towne also drew what appears to be this bridge on 11 August 1781. Richard Stephens has suggested that it is most probably the bridge between Vaglia and Cafaggiolo (*Francis Towne online*, F3T30).



Francis Towne (1739-1816)

***A Bridge between Florence and Bologna, 1781***

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection





*A Bridge near Florence*

Thomas Jones (1742 -1803)

***Walls of Rome – Porta Cavallegieri [sic]***

Signed and inscribed on wall in pencil: I.I. WALLS OF ROME – PORTA DE' CAV<sup>A</sup> LLEGIERI/T. JONES. No X., oil on Italian writing paper laid down on card  
29 x 39.6 cm; 11 3/18 x 15 5/8 inches

**Provenance**

Anna Maria Thomas, née Jones (1780-1807);  
Thomas Thomas (1778-1861);  
Clara Thomas (1814-1877);  
Clara Thomas (1841-1914);  
Henry Algernon Evan-Thomas (1895-1939);  
Charles Marmaduke Evan-Thomas (1897-1953);  
Mervyn Bourdillon (1924-2002);  
By direct descent to the present owner.



### Literature

Lawrence Gowing, *The Originality of Thomas Jones*, London, 1985, p. 33, pl. 24;  
Ed. Ann Sumner and Greg Smith, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803) An Artist Rediscovered*, 2003, no. 70, ill. p. 180

### Exhibited

Marble Hill House, London, *Thomas Jones*, 1970, no. 23;  
National Museum & Gallery, Cardiff, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 21 May – 10 August 2003, no. 70;  
Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 22 August – 26 October 2003, no. 70;  
National Gallery, London, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 12 November 2003 – 15 February 2004. No. 70

This atmospheric and immediate oil sketch, with its brilliant blue Roman sky, is one of Jones's most original oils on paper. The textural qualities of the long wall depicted in bright sunshine evoke the crumbling antiquity of Ancient Rome, contrasting ancient masonry with vegetation growing into and over the wall and tower. A couple of solitary figures and a mule stand at its foot. The emptiness and stillness of the composition belies the bustle of the city close to where Jones was working.

There is a pinhole in the upper right-hand corner, where the artist attached the paper while he was working. This method is often associated with work executed *plein air* and could indicate that this is where the sheet was attached to Jones's portable easel. The sheet dates from the late 1770s or early 1780s.



**Detail**

The day after Carnival ended in Rome in February 1777 there was a sudden improvement in the weather after a long dull spell (*Memoirs* p. 57) and Jones visited the outskirts of the city in search of new sketching grounds. There is a pencil sketch in the smaller Roman sketchbook (British Museum) inscribed 'Walls of Rome near St Peter's/12 February-1777' on which the present work appears to be based, although there are several major differences, notably in the actual doorway in the wall. The artist's two Roman sketchbooks (British Museum) contain many drawings of the walls and gates of Rome.



**Walls of Rome near St Peter's**

© The Trustees of the British Museum

The current work shows the Porta Pertusa, rather than the Porta Cavalleggeri, just along the Leonine wall. Jones's pencil sketch, with its general inscription, does not specify the gate in the drawing and it seems likely that he added the pencil inscription with the title, which includes a spelling correction, to the present work incorrectly from memory. It is not impossible that it is based on a drawing which is now lost, as the doorway, with the two smaller doors on either side of the main door, is highly distinctive.

While the exact date is unknown, the Porta Pertusa is likely to have been built around the end of the 14th century, when the Papacy returned from Avignon and took up residence in the Vatican (rather than the Lateran), when the existing three gates provided insufficient access. It is overlooked by the tower of San Giovanni, the south-western bastion of the former Leonine wall.

Another oil sketch of the Vatican's walls (Museo di Roma, Palazzo Braschi) is on paper of a similar size to the present work. It also has a pencil inscription in capital letters with the location 'WALLS OF ROME' in a prominent position on the walls and is numbered XIII in a similar way. Greg Smith has suggested that Jones added these inscriptions as decorative titles (see *An Artist Rediscovered*, p. 179).

Jones's affinity with old Italian walls of character, as illustrated in his much-admired oil sketch of the wall in Naples (National Gallery, London, see fig. 1) of a similar date, is well known. These fine oil sketches by Jones are regarded as important in the development of European *plein air* landscape painting.

While in Italy, Jones regularly bought paper and kept the records of his purchases in his account books. Peter Bower has observed that he most often used the Italian-made white laid writing papers manufactured by many of the small provincial paper mills (see *An Artist Rediscovered*, pp. 101-107 for an extensive analysis of the artist's papers). This is the support he has used for this oil sketch.





*Walls of Rome – Porta Cavallegieri [sic]*



Thomas Jones (1742-1803)

***In the Campagna, near Rome, 1783***

Signed l.l.: *T. JONES/1783*, pen and ink and watercolour over pencil on Dutch writing paper, signed on original mount of blue-grey wrapping paper l.r.: *T. JONES*, inscribed l.c.: *In the Campagna, near Rome*

24.7 x 34.7 cm.; 9 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 13 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches

**Provenance**

Anna Maria Thomas, née Jones (1780-1807);

Thomas Thomas (1778-1861);

Clara Thomas (1814-1877);

Clara Thomas (1841-1914);

Henry Algernon Evan-Thomas (1895-1939);

Charles Marmaduke Evan-Thomas (1897-1953);

Mervyn Bourdillon (1924-2002);

By direct descent to the present owner.

**Literature**

Ed. Ann Sumner and Greg Smith, *Thomas Jones (1742-1803)*

*An Artist Rediscovered*, 2003, no. 92, ill. p. 199



### Exhibited

Marble Hill House, London, *Thomas Jones*, 1970, no. 24;  
 National Museum & Gallery, Cardiff, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 21 May – 10 August 2003, no. 92;  
 Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 22 August – 26 October 2003, no. 92;  
 National Gallery, London, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 12 November 2003 – 15 February 2004, no. 92

This evocative watercolour portrays a rather idyllic view of the sundrenched Roman Campagna. Jones emphasizes the sharp shadows cast by the sun over the landscape, through which the traveller on his horse is moving. A shepherd with his flock stands in the sunshine, but with his head in the shade, opposite the ruined tower to the left of the composition.

This significant work is based on a drawing in the artist's smaller Roman sketchbook which is inscribed 'on ye road to Civita Castellana/ above Ponte Mola near Ovid's Tomb/ 15 Feb. 1777' (British Museum, London 1891-5-16-17).



***On ye road to Civita Castellana above Ponte Mola near Ovid's Tomb***

© The Trustees of the British Museum

On 15th February 1777, the artist had a productive day and drew fourteen pencil drawings as he travelled along the Tiber and on the road to Civita Castellana. His drawings in the sketchbook are simple pencil outlines with inscriptions referring to location and colouring and usually dated precisely.

Three other studio works were produced from these sketchbook drawings, when the artist was back in London and working 'for my own Amusement' and these include 'Houses on the Road from Rome to Civita Castellana' (cat. no. 4). Greg Smith has suggested that the present work may have been conceived as a pair to a third watercolour looking in the opposite direction, 'On the Road to Civita Castellana' (*An Artist Rediscovered*, cat. 149, private collection), which looks south towards Rome and depicts St Peter's and the Villa Mellini on the horizon to the right with the tower on the right of the composition in the foreground. This work is dated 1785 within the composition and Smith has suggested that the date of 1783 inscribed on the present drawing in the lower left corner and on the mount [of the present drawing] may not be accurate, if the three works were made at the same time. This group of three watercolours are all the same size, drawn on the same paper and originally mounted in the same way.

There is, however, an immediacy to the present watercolour and the composition and rendering of the tower is very close to the pencil drawing. It was included in the section of works executed in Italy in the bicentenary exhibition *An Artist Rediscovered*. The horseman in the present work is included in the sketchbook drawing and was drawn from life and not added later as staffage.

The smaller Roman sketchbook contains Jones's first impressions of Lakes Nemi and Albano, which he knew from Richard Wilson's studies, and he used it on his trips in December 1776 and during spring 1777. His famous phrase 'Magick Land' originates from this period. The sketchbook belonged to Thomas Thomas, the original owner of the present work, and was sold to the British Museum by a descendant in 1981.

The Dutch writing paper, on which the present work is drawn, was available in Italy in the late eighteenth century along with paper from England and France. Jones's account books record his purchases of 'carta d'olanda'. Peter Bower has observed that not all paper described as Dutch was in fact of Dutch manufacture and may have been made in Italy (*An Artist Rediscovered*, pp. 102-103).



*In the Campagna, near Rome, 1783*

Thomas Jones (1742 -1803)

***Houses on the Road from Rome to Civita  
Castellana***

Signed l.r. on mount: *T. Jones*, and inscribed: *near Rome  
in the Road to Florence*

watercolour over pencil on Dutch writing paper

24.7 x 34.7 cm; 9 ¾ x 13 5/8 inches

**Provenance**

Anna Maria Thomas, née Jones (1780-1807);

Thomas Thomas (1778-1861);

Clara Thomas (1814-1877);

Clara Thomas (1841-1914);

Henry Algernon Evan-Thomas (1895-1939);

Charles Marmaduke Evan-Thomas (1897-1953);

Mervyn Bourdillon (1924-2002);

By direct descent to the present owner.

**Literature**

Ed. Ann Sumner and Greg Smith, *Thomas Jones (1742 –  
1803) An Artist Rediscovered*, 2003, no. 150., ill. p. 258





### Exhibited

Marble Hill House, London, *Thomas Jones*, 1970, no. 75 as 'Near Rome on the Road to Florence';

National Museum & Gallery, Cardiff, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 21 May – 10 August 2003, no. 150;

Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 22 August – 26 October 2003, no. 150;

National Gallery, London, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 12 November 2003 – 15 February 2004, no. 150

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In this beautiful watercolour of a sunny day on the road from Rome to Civita Castellana, Jones adopts a close viewpoint which emphasizes the breadth of the road along which the travellers are moving.

The artist is interested in the shadows cast by the sun and draws the female figure on a mule emerging into the sunshine. The road is partially shaded by the trees and shrubs which grow along its sides. The work was drawn in London around the time of Jones's return from Italy.

This watercolour is based on a drawing in the artist's smaller Roman sketchbook, which is inscribed 'beyond ye Ponte Mola Road from Rome to Civita Castellana and beyond Loretto' (British Museum, London 1891-5-16-17) and immediately precedes two other drawings made along the same road which the artist also worked up into watercolours 'In the Campagna near Rome' (cat. no. 3) and 'On the Road to Civita Castellana near Rome' (*An Artist Rediscovered*, no. 149). The artist drew fourteen pencil drawings on 15th February 1777, as he travelled along the Tiber and on the road to Civita Castellana. He has elaborated the composition in this watercolour, adding in figures and travellers for interest.

Civita Castellana was visited by many artists but as is so often the case, Jones has chosen to record a moment where he stopped along a road rather than drawing the more conventional view of the town itself.

Jones's account books record his regular purchases of 'carta d'olanda'. He spent 4s. 6d. for six sheets of Dutch Imperial paper, which measured 30 by 22 inches, larger than a letter paper size and presumably bought it for drawing (Account Book, 27 December 1781). He probably divided the paper into half or quarter sheets, which would have been enough for him to draw twelve or twenty-four works. Jones was most particular about the paper he used and selected sheets with similar surface strengths (see P. Bower, *An Artist Rediscovered*, pp. 102-103).



***beyond ye Ponte Mola/Road from Rome to  
Civita Castellana & Loretto***

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*Houses on the Road from Rome to Civita Castellana*

Thomas Jones (1742 -1803)

***Near Naples with a mule on a track***

Signed and inscribed l.r. in pencil: near *NAPLES*./T. JONES ./No XXXV., oil on Italian writing paper, laid down on card

27.7 x 43 cm.; 10 7/8 x 16 7/8 inches

**Provenance**

Anna Maria Thomas, née Jones (1780-1807);

Thomas Thomas (1778-1861);

Clara Thomas (1814-1877);

Clara Thomas (1841-1914);

Henry Algernon Evan-Thomas (1895-1939);

Charles Marmaduke Evan-Thomas (1897-1953);

Mervyn Bourdillon (1924-2002);

By direct descent to the present owner.

**Literature**

Ed. Ann Sumner and Greg Smith, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803) An Artist Rediscovered*, 2003, no. 125, ill. p. 234



### Exhibited

Marble Hill House, London, *Thomas Jones*, 1970, no. 88

National Museum & Gallery, Cardiff, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 21 May – 10 August 2003, no. 125;

Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 22 August – 26 October 2003, no. 125;

National Gallery, London, *Thomas Jones (1742 – 1803): An Artist Rediscovered*, 12 November 2003 – 15 February 2004, no. 125

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‘I discovered a picturesque road...On each side of which were immense Masses of Tuffa, finely fringed with Shrubs of various hues and Shades, intermixed with large overgrown Aloes and Indian figs’, (*Memoirs*, p. 113).

Jones captures a magical moment in the dry heat of the day under the Italian sun, in this exceptional *plein air* oil sketch painted in the early 1780s. A mule stands on a path in the stony terrain, and an enigmatic single figure wearing a hat is seen from behind, leaning on a rock, apparently gazing at the view. Perhaps the sea can be seen in the distance. Aloes are growing from the rocks, which are overhung with Indian figs, and the trees provide welcome shade from the bright sunlight, which bleaches the colour from the landscape and casts sharp shadows across the path in the middle of the day.

In his *Memoirs* Jones records details of the many expeditions he made around Naples, often with friends and fellow artists, when they sketched in pencil and in oils. Jones probably began this beautiful and immediate work on one of these excursions. It is extraordinarily original and atmospheric and is a fine example of his *plein air* oil sketches. It does not relate to a known drawing.



The location of this work is not certain, but on 22 July 1782 Jones writes of finding a road with similar vegetation, 'In my Walk this afternoon, I discovered a picturesque road which lay behind the Hospital of S. Gennaro- On each side of which were immense Masses of Tuffa, finely fringed with Shrubs of various hues and Shades, intermixed with large overgrown Aloes and Indian figs – In these Rocks were large Grottoes of Caverns, from whence Stones for the purpose of building were excavated, and whose Apertures were decorated with festoons of different creeping plants waving to and fro in the Air'. He noted that with Lusieri, 'we spend a great part of our time together in such kind of Scenery, making Studies from Nature', (*Memoirs*, p. 113).

William Pars arrived in Naples in October 1780 and returned in the summer of 1781 for a longer stay, lodging with Jones for a while. Jones wrote that the two artists 'made daily excursions with our portfolios and pocket books' (*Memoirs* p. 105). Francis Towne arrived in Naples on March 1781, and Jones showed him around the city, revisiting the sites and also taking him to the 'picturesque places' he had discovered (*Memoirs*, p. 102). From 17th to 18th October 1782 Jones was again exploring 'those picturesque roads which I had discovered in the Environs of the City and have already described, except that which leads up from the S'a M'a della Vita, between the Vineyards & Roks to the du Poste- and another rocky Passage to the Miradose a Villa belonging to the Prince L'Arricia' (*Memoirs* pp. 115-116).

The oil paint on this sheet is thinly applied and rapidly worked and there are pin holes in three of the corners, where it was probably

attached to his travelling easel that he used as a support. Jones has added his signature and inscribed and numbered the work in his characteristic pencil script below the aloe growing on the rock in the right foreground.

This sketch is painted on Italian-made white laid writing paper which would have been manufactured in one of many small provincial paper mills (see Peter Bower, *An Artist Rediscovered*, pp. 101-107).



*Detail*



*Near Naples with a mule on a track*

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Richard Veasey, *Thomas Jones Pencerrig Artist-Traveller Country Squire*, Wales, 2017



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## JANE MUNRO

After a decades-long curatorial career at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Jane Munro now works as an independent scholar/curator.

She specializes in the history of European painting, drawing and printmaking from the late 18th to early 20th centuries. In many cases her approach has been interdisciplinary, embracing aspects of literature, psychology and the history of science.

Jane has curated over one hundred research-led exhibitions in the UK, Europe, Japan and the USA. Recently, this has involved collaborations with the Yale Center of British Art; Musée Bourdelle, Paris; Denver Art Museum; National Gallery of Art, Washington DC; Fondation Custodia, Paris and Teylers Museum, Haarlem. She has twice been awarded Apollo Magazine's Exhibition of the Year award.

During her time at the Fitzwilliam Museum, she taught and examined for several departments at the University of Cam-

bridge, principally History of Art, serving for fifteen years as Director of Studies in History of Art at Christ's College. Jane is a former member of the International Advisory Committee of Keepers of Public Collections of Graphic Art. She has served on the committee of Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, the Court of the Royal College of Art, The Walpole Society, and been advisor to AHRB Creative and Performing Arts Grants, the Museums and Galleries Commission, the Art Fund, the National Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the UK Government's Acceptance-in-Lieu Scheme. In 2023 and 2024, she was Principal Investigator for Growing Networks, a research project funded by the Getty Paper Project.

Jane has been made Chevalier des Arts et Lettres and Chevalier dans l'Ordre National de Mérite by the French Government in recognition of her work on French cultural history and promotion of cultural exchange with French institutions.

## KAREN TAYLOR

Karen Taylor has been working with paintings and drawings for over thirty years. She works as a fine art agent and dealer, offering independent, impartial advice to collectors and museums all over the world on buying, selling and all areas of collection management.

After graduating from Brasenose College, Oxford, where she read history, she joined Sotheby's British Paintings department and spent nearly ten years there. She ran the British drawings and watercolours auctions and specialized in topographical and travel picture sales, where she built up the Greek and Turkish areas.

In 1993 she joined Spink's picture department. Here she expanded her interest in Oriental, Indian and Far Eastern art and organised exhibitions of Orientalist pictures and twentieth century British paintings and contemporary artists. She also

represented Spink at international art fairs in Basel, Maastricht, New York, Hong Kong and Singapore, amongst other places, and served on the prestigious Grosvenor House Art & Antiques Fair picture vetting committee.

Based in Sydney for several years, where she renewed her interest in Australian art, Karen headed up Spink Australia before returning to London. Since 2001 she has been running her fine art consultancy, handling British paintings and drawings of all periods, typically placing pieces privately and working with many of the world's major museums. She exhibits regularly at London fairs and holds exhibitions in St James's.

She can provide valuations for all purposes and advice on insurance, framing, conservation, lighting and display, storage and logistics. She works by appointment in West London and is always interested in buying British paintings and drawings.

# KAREN TAYLOR FINE ART

+44 (0)7881 581275  
[karen@karentaylorfineart.com](mailto:karen@karentaylorfineart.com)  
[www.karentaylorfineart.com](http://www.karentaylorfineart.com)