LOT 81
GIOVANNI PAOLO PANINI
PIACENZA 1691 - 1765 ROME
AN EXTENSIVE LANDSCAPE WITH VILLAS AND FIGURES, INCLUDING THE ARTIST HIMSELF, DINING BENEATH A PERGOLA IN THE FOREGROUND
oil on canvas
51 1/4 by 38 1/4 in.; 130 by 97 cm.

ESTIMATE 2,000,000-3,000,000 USD

PROVENANCE
‘Prince Poniatowski’ collection, Paris, by 1931 (see Exhibited below), probably Prince John Willard Marie-Andrée Poniatowski (1899-1977);
Thence by descent to his two children François Charles Michel Marie André (1922-2008) and Constance Ava Louise (1925-2007), in whose respective families’ possession they remained until recently.
EXHIBITED
Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Mostra del Giardino Italiano, 1931, nos. 80 and 81 (together with its pendant), lent by 'Prince Poniatowski, Paris'.

LITERATURE
A. Lensi ed., Mostra del Giardino Italiano, exhibition catalogue, Florence 1931, p. 111, cat. nos. 80-81 (with its pendant);
L. Ozzola, "Aggiunte al Panini", in Strenna Piacentina, Anno XVIII, 1940, p. 124, reproduced figs. 3-4 (according to Arisi, 1961);
F. Arisi, Gian Paolo Panini, Rome 1961, pp. 181-182, cat. no. 181, not reproduced (with erroneous provenance);¹
A. Busiri Vici, Trittico paesistico romano del '700: Paolo Anesi - Paolo Monaldi - Alessio de Marchis, Rome 1986, pp. 31 and 36, footnote 36, reproduced p. 35, fig. 29, and a detail on p. 36, fig. 29a (as by Giovanni Paolo Panini and Paolo Anesi);
F. Arisi, Gian Paolo Panini e i fasti della Roma del '700, Rome 1986, p. 418, cat. no. 372 (181), reproduced (with erroneous provenance, as in 1961);

CATALOGUE NOTE
These extraordinary paintings, this and the following lot, constitute the only known examples of a collaboration between Gian Paolo Panini, the most celebrated view-painter in 18th-century Rome, and Paolo Anesi, arguably the most accomplished landscapist of his time. Both paintings were almost certainly designed by Panini, as the numerous related preparatory drawings suggest, but the landscapes in both works were executed by Anesi. Given the uniqueness of this occurrence in Panini’s oeuvre it seems reasonable to assume that this was at the patron’s bequest, though the exact circumstances surrounding the commission are unknown.

Giovanni Paolo Panini was the most admired of the Roman vedutisti (view-painters) and his views of ancient and modern Rome inspired foreign visitors to the city, especially those travelling around Italy on the Grand Tour. His paintings typically portrayed the city’s most popular sites, though these monuments were often represented in imaginary surroundings and arranged in fantastical ways. Panini was elected to the Congregazione dei Virtuosi del Pantheon in 1718 and became a member of the Accademia di San Luca the following year, going on to become Principe there in 1754 and 1755. In 1724 Panini married Caterina Gosset, the sister-in-law of Nicolas Vleughels, the director of the Académie Française à Rome. After teaching perspective there, he himself was received as a member of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris; an honour rarely bestowed upon Roman artists. Panini’s success persisted throughout the second and third quarter of the 18th century, until his death in 1765, as he met the growing demand for his vedute with an extensive workshop, to which Hubert Robert and Panini’s own son Francesco also belonged.

This exceptional painting, together with its pendant showing the same protagonists in a different environment (see following lot), are unique in Panini’s oeuvre; not only for their unusual subject matter but also because they constitute the only known example of Panini’s collaboration with another artist. In 1961 Ferdinando Arisi was the first to note that the landscape settings in both paintings were atypical of Panini, but it was not until some years later (1976) that Andrea Busiri Vici convincingly identified them as the product of a unique collaboration between Panini and Paolo Anesi. The latter seems to have been responsible for the landscapes and distant figures in each painting, whilst Panini executed the main protagonists and buildings in the foreground. This hypothesis was accepted by Arisi in his 1986 monograph on Panini, in which he noted the singularity of this occurrence in the artist’s oeuvre.
Paolo Anesi (1697-1773) was an exact contemporary of Panini, though he was six years younger and outlived the older artist by eight years. Anesi was one of the most important paesaggisti working in Rome in the mid-18th century and he specialised in painting views and ideal landscapes inspired by the Roman campagna. His style is reminiscent of Andrea Locatelli (1695-1741), another contemporary of both artists and one whose works have often been confused with Anesi’s. His documented frescoes painted for Cardinal Alessandro Albani in Villa Albani (now Torlonia) in 1761 and the large cycle of canvases he painted in 1767 for Villa Chigi at Monte delle Gioie are amongst Anesi’s most accomplished works. In fact, Anesi’s association with the Albani family may be significant with regard to the present works. Anesi’s frescoes in Villa Chigi (now Torlonia), commissioned by Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692-1779), are documented from 1761. The project for the villa originated in 1745 and construction began in 1751, reaching completion twelve years later. Villa Albani was built primarily to house Cardinal Alessandro’s extensive collection of antiquities and ancient Roman sculpture, much of which was dispersed after the Napoleonic wars. Although Panini himself was not employed on the project he did execute a marvellous watercolor drawing of the external portico of the Galleria at Villa Albani, in all likelihood datable to shortly after its construction in 1758. This piece of evidence demonstrates a clear link between the two artists and Cardinal Alessandro, and it is tempting to assume a possible Albani commission for these two paintings.

Although popular and extremely successful as an independent artist, Anesi is also known to have collaborated with other Roman painters: he provided numerous landscape settings for Paolo Monaldi’s figures, both for easel paintings and for the Chigi cycle mentioned above (one of which is emphatically signed and dated by Anesi). The collaboration with Monaldi would appear to date from the 1760s but Anesi is also known to have worked with another figure-painter much earlier in his career – Pompeo Batoni. Anesi provided the lush landscapes for Batoni’s figures in the Ideal landscape with the castle of Zagarolo and A fantastical view of the via Appia with the tomb of Cecilia Metella, a pair of pictures in the Marchese Malvezzi-Campelli collection, Rome, which have been dated to the end of the 1730s. For reasons that shall be discussed later, Anesi’s collaboration with Panini in the two paintings being offered here would appear to date from a time between his association with Batoni and Monaldi; that is, most likely, in the first half of the 1750s.

The two paintings being offered here do not function, strictly speaking, as a pair, though they were certainly conceived together. They depict similar landscapes, perhaps even two different views of the same place, and two men are shown with an entourage. In the first painting the two men are shown seated at ease beneath a pergola, dressed in simple frock-coats and cloth caps, being served food and refreshments by no less than six servants whilst three musicians play the violin, lute and cello for their enjoyment. A man in a frock-coat stands upon the terrace surmounting the portico, looking at the horizon through his telescope, two books piled up beside him: although the identity of this man or the meaning of his inclusion here have not been ascertained, one cannot help but feel that his presence is significant. Beyond the main protagonists lies a villa with distinctive rustication, its picturesque garden lined with empty niches: figures promenade through this and other formal gardens beyond. On the other side of the garden walls a number of figures walk along the road in the middle distance, pausing to collect water and admire the fountain which, it seems, is inspired by Bernini’s Moor from the Fontana del Moro in Piazza Navona, Rome. The anecdotal details of an exotic parrot perched on a bar in the lower right corner, with a cat waiting patiently underneath, add an element of humor to the scene. The second painting (see following lot) shows the same two men in more formal attire, wearing their wigs and going on a promenade in the countryside. A man in a frock-coat stands upon the terrace surmounting the portico, looking at the horizon through his telescope, two books piled up beside him: although the identity of this man or the meaning of his inclusion here have not been ascertained, one cannot help but feel that his presence is significant. Beyond the main protagonists lies a villa with distinctive rustication, its picturesque garden lined with empty niches: figures promenade through this and other formal gardens beyond. On the other side of the garden walls a number of figures walk along the road in the middle distance, pausing to collect water and admire the fountain which, it seems, is inspired by Bernini’s Moor from the Fontana del Moro in Piazza Navona, Rome. The anecdotal details of an exotic parrot perched on a bar in the lower right corner, with a cat waiting patiently underneath, add an element of humor to the scene. The second painting (see following lot) shows the same two men in more formal attire, wearing their wigs and going on a promenade in the countryside. A man in the foreground greets them respectfully, removing his hat and bowing before them, whilst horse-drawn carriages ride along nearby. The countryside is similar but markedly more rural in character; the fountains are simpler and the buildings more rustic. A merry company are enjoying a meal en plein air just beyond a wall to the left of the composition, and numerous figures in conversation are dotted along the road. The sweeping vistas are framed on each side by towering trees and the paintings’ vertical format lends itself to the perspectival representation of the long, straight road whose route dominates both compositions.

As mentioned, above the two main protagonists are the same in each painting, and one of them is certainly to be
identified as Panini himself. He is the man seated with his back to us in the first painting, identifiable by his distinctive physiognomy (particularly the shape of his chin): in fact, Panini may have used his own self-portrait drawing in the British Museum sketchbook for he wears the same cloth cap and his head is angled in exactly the same way (f. 117; see fig. 1). Panini is also to be identified by the eight-pointed gold cross on a red ribbon worn on his chest. This medal, which is more clearly visible in the following lot, is the cross of the Cavaliere dello Speron d’Oro. Sponsored by the great art collector and enthusiast Cardinal Silvio Valenti Gonzaga (1690-1756), Panini was awarded the title in October 1749, thus providing us with a firm terminus post quem for the two paintings’ execution. In the same year Panini signed and dated his painting of Cardinal Valenti Gonzaga’s picture gallery, now at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, in which Panini represents himself standing next to the Cardinal. The artist’s features compare well with those in the Hartford painting, as well as with his self-portrait in the Concert held at the Teatro Argentina to celebrate the marriage of the Dauphin to Marie-Josephe of Saxony in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (1747); and his self-portrait in the Interior of an Imaginary Picture Gallery with views of Ancient Rome (Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart), painted in 1756-57 for the Duc de Choiseul, as a pendant to an Interior of an Imaginary Picture Gallery with views of Modern Rome (1757; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). The fact that Panini is not shown wearing the order of the Speron d’Oro in the 1747 Concert, nor in the view of Cardinal Valenti Gonzaga’s gallery of 1749, confirms that he had not yet been awarded the honor, especially since he is manifestly shown wearing the medal in all subsequent portrayals. Panini seems a little older here than he does in the Louvre Concert but is certainly close in age to his self-portraits of 1757-59, suggesting that the two paintings being offered here can be plausibly dated to the first half of the 1750s. Such a dating also accords well with Panini’s pictorial style at this time.

The man accompanying Panini, dressed in black and wearing the cross of the Order of the Knights of Malta, is harder to identify. It is tempting to try to identify him as Paolo Anesi, with whom Panini collaborated on the pictures, but no portrait of Anesi has been identified to date. It also seems unlikely that Anesi would have been a member of the Knights of Malta, despite working in 1732 for the Priorato romano dell’Ordine di Malta in Santa Sabina, at the behest of the Gran Priore Cardinal Ruspoli who was also a patron of Jan Frans van Bloemen and Andrea Locatelli. Although Panini has seemingly portrayed the two main protagonists as ‘equals’, it seems far more likely that Panini was keen to portray himself as of equal status to the man beside him who, quite probably, is the patron who commissioned the two pictures.

It is unclear whether these extensive views represent specific locations outside Rome or are entirely the product of the artists’ imagination. The landscape certainly appears realistic and is reminiscent of the Roman campagna; in particular the area around Frascati. Although none of the villas have been firmly identified one can’t help but feel that at least some of the buildings may be topographical, given that they are accurately depicted and have a certain specificity about them, though their placement is surely imaginary. The long straight road is evocative of the via Appia leading to the Colli Albani, which Anesi is known to have depicted in another painting, formerly with Galleria Antiquaria Sestieri in Rome. The tree-lined avenue is certainly reminiscent of the via Appia but none of the villas appear in the ex-Sestieri painting.

The distinction between areas painted by Panini or Anesi is by no means clear-cut. The landscapes and trees certainly seem to be by Anesi’s hand, and the foreground buildings and main protagonists are undoubtedly by Panini, but some of the secondary figures and carriages are difficult to attribute with any certainty to one or other artist. The paint surface and execution of both paintings do seem extraordinarily consistent, suggesting that the two artists were literally working side by side, but the general design of both works must surely be due to Panini himself. A number of related drawings from Panini’s British Museum sketchbook would seem to support this idea. A sketch originally done for one of the cellists in the Louvre Concert of 1747 has been reused here for the musician playing the cello in the foreground (f. 58; see fig. 2). It seems likely that Panini kept the sketch to hand and referred back to his drawing(s) for later painted compositions. Another drawing from the same sketchbook shows a man rushing forward with arms outstretched (holding a tray?) and this figure is used, in reverse, for the waiter dressed in yellow, just behind the musicians in the foreground (f. 124; see fig. 3). Finally, the group of horsemen and carriages in the middle distance of
the pendant painting (see following lot), although minor and small in scale, closely correspond to those in Panini’s
drawing (f. 39; see fig. 4).

A NOTE ON THE PROVENANCE
First published in 1931, this painting and its pendant were lent to an exhibition in Florence by a certain ‘Prince
Poniatowski’ from Paris. The lender is likely to have been Prince John Willard Marie-Andrée Poniatowski (1899-1977)
who married Frances Lawrance in Paris on 27 December 1919. They had three children - Marie-André François
Ladislaus (1921-1945), François Charles Michel Marie André (1922-2008), and Constance Ava Louise (1925-2007) -
and the paintings are thought to have passed by family inheritance to the latter two, in whose respective families’
possession they remained until recently. When or where the paintings may have entered the Princely Poniatowski
collections is unknown, although Prince John Willard Marie-Andrée’s great-great-grandfather was Prince Stanislaw
Poniatowski (1754-1833), an avid art collector and patron. Stanislaw travelled extensively throughout Europe in 1773-
75, 1784-86 and 1791-95, before settling definitively in Rome where he employed the architect Giuseppe Valadier to
build his residence in the centro storico and the celebrated Villa Poniatowski. Stanislaw patronised contemporary
artists - Anton Raphael Mengs, Antonio Canova, Johann Joachim Winckelmann - and sat to Angelica Kauffman on
numerous occasions (see, for example, her portrait now in the Royal Castle in Warsaw). After Stanislaw’s death in
1833 much of his collection comprising of archeological items, paintings, sculpture, drawings, bronzes, coins and
medals, and objets d’art were dispersed in a series of sales, but these paintings do not figure in any of those
catalogues. It seems reasonable to assume therefore that Stanislaw may have acquired the paintings in Rome and
the canvases remained in family hands, passing by descent (in order) to Stanislaw’s son Józef (1816-1874); then to
his eldest son Stanislaus August (1835-1908); then to his third son André (1864-1954); and finally to his third son
John Willard Marie-André, lender to the 1931 exhibition.

We are grateful to both Prof. David Marshall and Mr. Guy Sainty for their assistance in cataloguing this lot.

1. Arisi erroneously identified the painting, together with its pendant, with a pair of pictures showing Le Départ pour la
promenade and La Rencontre sold in Paris, 21 May 1941.
3. For Panini’s watercolour drawing of the Galleria of Villa Albani see ibid., p. 47, fig. 39.
4. An impressive collaborative painting by Anesi and Monaldi showing A view of the Campidoglio and the Campo
Vaccino is in the Museo di Roma at Palazzo Braschi, Rome.
5. Busiri Vici, ibid., pp. 32-33, reproduced figs. 26 and 27; and, more recently, A.M. Clark, ed. E.P. Bowron, Pompeo
6. British Museum sketchbook, inv. 1858,0626.655, contains drawings that date from 1739-59 and an inscription by
the artist on the first leaf dated 12 August 1749. Folio 117 shows the artist drawing himself, probably in front of a
mirror, and his head is extremely close to that represented here.
7. Inv. no. 1948.478. In the Hartford picture Panini shows himself holding a palette and paintbrushes but is not yet
adorned with the cross of the Cavaliere dello Speron d’Oro (which he was to receive in 1749, the year in which the
painting was executed). When Cardinal Valenti Gonzaga died in 1756 many of his paintings entered the Torlonia
collection, whilst others were sold at auction in 1763.
8. A. Imbellone, in A. Lo Bianco & A. Negro eds., il Settecento a Roma, exhibition catalogue, Rome, Palazzo Venezia,
9. Further autograph versions of this pair were executed in 1757 for the Duc de Choiseul again (Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York) and in 1758-59 for Claude-François Rogier de Beaufort-Montboissier de Canillac (Musée du Louvre,
Paris). Panini’s self-portrait appears in all three variants of the Interior of an Imaginary Picture Gallery with views of
Ancient Rome.
10. Reproduced in Busiri Vici, ibid., p. 37, fig. 30.
Fig. 1
Giovanni Paolo Panini, British Museum Sketchbook, f. 39, inv. 1858, 0626.655

Fig. 2
Giovanni Paolo Panini, British Museum Sketchbook, f. 117, inv. 1858, 0626.655

Fig. 3
fig. 2 Giovanni Paolo Panini, British Museum Sketchbook, f. 58, inv. 1858, 0626.655