

Joseph Wright of Derby and his Visit to Italy 1773 - 1775

Image: Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797), Eruption of Mount Vesuvius (1774). Gouache on paper.

Image from: Derby Museum & Art Gallery

Text: Malcolm Dick

Summary

Joseph Wright left for Italy in 1773. Over the next two years he travelled throughout the country, observing, drawing and writing letters to his family and friends in England. Wright was interested in the artistic and architectural remains of ancient Rome and the Renaissance. He recorded his observations in pen and ink and chalk drawings, but more importantly in the long term, he drew the places he visited. They included Rome itself and Italian landscapes and coastal scenes, particularly around Naples. Some of his most dramatic images included his views of Mount Vesuvius, including the volcanic eruption which heads this exhibition.

Wright's Italian experience helped him to develop as an artist. This exhibition presents and explores a selection of images he created during his time in the country and paintings of Italian landscapes he created after his return to England.