

GALERIE
ALEXIS BORDES



IDEALIZED
EVERY DAY
LIFE

FROM THE CENTURY
OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT
TO THE RESTORATION

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« I found pleasure only in painting. »

Elisabeth Vigée le Brun (1755 – 1842)





IDEALIZED EVERY DAY LIFE

FROM THE CENTURY
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TO THE RESTORATION

Catalogue written by Mégane Ollivier



VERSION
FRANÇAISE

www.alexis-bordes.com/23vierevee-fr

English translation by Christine ROLLAND

Exhibition

From Thursday, November 16th, 2023 to Friday, January 19th, 2024

Alexis Bordes Gallery
4, rue de la Paix – 76002 Paris
Stairwell 2, 2nd floor on the right

Opening hours: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – 2 to 7 p.m.
Open Saturday, November 18th and 25th, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

| *Préface*

This autumn, the gallery presents an exhibition devoted to “daily life from the century of the Enlightenment to the Restoration.”

Strongly influenced by Dutch-style trends, the artists of the first third of the 18th century reinvented Nature in the wake of Watteau and his *Fêtes galantes*.

The catalogue opens the way with a pastoral scene from François Boucher’s youth. Realized in about 1730, this easel painting evokes a young shepherdess and her flock in an idealized countryside such as those in which the artist had been immersed during his stay in Italy.

The visit continues with a rare view of the Bay of Naples with Vesuvius erupting, painted by Lacroix de Marseille.

Poetically imbued, this late afternoon landscape is bathed in soft warm light. The fishermen in the foreground go about their business without worrying about the volcanic eruption taking place.

A work by Pierre-Antoine Demachy depicting the Louvre colonnade enlivened by figures constitutes a beautiful image of daily life in Paris in about 1770.

The Restoration period will be evoked with the rediscovery of a portrait of Mademoiselle Mars by Louis Hersent.

Contemporary with Baron Gerard, Hersent captures his sitter brilliantly in about 1820, at the triumphant height of her career as an actress at the Comédie Française.

We invite you to come in numbers to discover all these works at the gallery starting November 16th.

Alexis Bordes
Paris, November 2023

Remerciements

Located on rue de la Paix, the gallery has a predilection for the French 18th century.

Encouraged by the great French and foreign institutions, as well as by many collectors, we advise and give our expertise both for the purchase and for selling art.

This catalogue is the fruit of a long maturing process with the precious assistance of art historians and museum curators whom we thank for their advice and enlightened opinions.

We would like to pay homage to all the museums who have demonstrated their trust by integrating works from the Gallery into their collections:

Art Gallery of South Australia, Deutsches Historisches Museum de Berlin, Musée des BeauxArts de Nancy, École Nationale des BeauxArts de Paris, Fondation Custodia, Fitzwilliam Museum de Cambridge, Musée Louis-Philippe Château d'Eu, Musée de la ComédieFrançaise, Getty Research Center de Los Angeles, Cabinet des Dessins du Château de Fontainebleau, Musée Cognacq-Jay, Galeries Nationales d'Ottawa, Musée des BeauxArts de Nantes, Musée National du Château de Compiègne, Musée National d'Art et d'Histoire du Luxembourg, Musée des BeauxArts de Quimper, Musée des BeauxArts de Troyes, Musée des BeauxArts de Dôle, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, Château de Versailles, Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Tate Britain de Londres, Musée-promenade de Marly-le-Roi, Château de Lunéville, Musée d'Orsay, Staatliche Kunsthalle de Karlsruhe, Gorkums Museum, Musée du Grand-Siècle de Saint-Cloud, Musée du Louvre, Musée Émile Hermès...

I insist on warmly thanking all those without whom this catalogue would never have seen the light of day:

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Art Historian

Monsieur Jean Luc RYAUX
Art Historian

Monsieur Marc AGHENIO
Painting conservator

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Painting conservator

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Picture framers, old frames restorer

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Art framer

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Photographer

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François Boucher

(Paris, 1703-1770)

1 | *The Farmer's Children*

1731 -1732

Oil on canvas

33.3 x 45.3 cm. (13 1/8 x 17 13/16 in.)

Provenance:

- Paris, Private Collection.

Several high quality versions exist of this early work by François Boucher with some variation in dimensions and picture details, the most important being that of the presence or not of the ox on the right side which was taken from Jacopo Bassano. A. Ananoff and D. Wildenstein reproduced a version without the ox in 1976 (I, p. 159) whose location today is unknown. The version exhibited here, which recently reappeared on the Parisian art market, is one of three known to present this ox strongly inspired by Jacopo Bassano. The sheep are also obviously evocative of the Venetian artist, who had been so appreciated by collectors a few decades earlier that Louis XIV had devoted a "Gallery of Bassano" to him in Versailles.¹ Entitled *The Farmer's Children*, an engraving by Louis-Michel Halbou after Boucher realized in the 1760S makes it possible to attribute diverse versions of the same picture without any doubt to Louis XV's painter (P. Jean-Richard, *L'œuvre gravé de François Boucher*, RMN, 1978, no. 1072).

Back in France in 1731 after three years in Italy during which he did additional drawings after Bassano in Rome, young François Boucher painted small pictures to earn a living. In them, he associated figures drawn mainly from Abraham Bloemaert and Jacopo Bassano with landscapes strongly influenced by Domenico Campagnola or Antoine Watteau. These compositions, which formed an original synthesis between various sources of inspiration, were well received by the public and already anticipated what would become François Boucher's "pastorals." The young not well known artist did not sign these little compositions; he did not have a studio and realized all his commissions by himself by reusing and painting the same pictures several times from memory with slightly differing dimensions and variations in details. Thus a *Return from Market* that was painted three times, a *Joseph's Departure* painted four times, and a *View of*



Ill. 1

Louis Michel Halbou after François Boucher

The Farmer's Children

c. 1760

engraving

Inscriptions:

Lower left: *F. Boucher fecit / A Paris chez le...*; Lower center: *Les Enfants du Fermier*;

Lower right: *Louis Michel Halbou Sculp.*

Campo Vaccino painted at least twice exist from this same period of his youth. One could cite multiple examples, mainly in landscape, but sometimes in mythological or religious subjects as well.²

The technical skill of the picture, its brushstrokes, use of white impasto, presence of an underlying orangey-pink layer of preparation, and especially the utilisation of unstable black pigments which were feared by French painters other than Boucher, are those of an original work of high quality. The skillful association of diverse influences is rendered convincingly here through refined





details, such as the pink and blue skies, transparency of water, elegance of the side-lighting on the trees, and the animals' benevolent almost human gaze – elements which would constitute the very essence of François Boucher's art throughout his life.

While the animals owe a lot to Bassano, the figures on the left and the background landscape are strongly inspired by Watteau. For example, this young girl with her raised shoulder and partially hidden face brings to mind the *Love Lesson* which today is in the National Museum in Stockholm (inv. NM 5015). Specifically, in about 1734, the picture was at Jean de Julienne's, Watteau's patron and friend who was also the publisher between 1726 and 1728 of the *Figures de Différents caractères* for which François Boucher had been one of the two main engravers. This strong influence of figures from Watteau, determinant in young Boucher's training, explains why only one of the three versions of *The Farmer's Children* could have been erroneously catalogued in the 19th and 20th century sales as by Watteau, until direct comparison in 2002 of this version with the version engraved in about 1760 by Louis-Michel Halbou made it possible to definitively return the identification of the composition to Boucher.

Three versions of *The Farmer's Children* thus show the same landscape, the same couple accompanied by sheep, and especially the same ox on the right. These three versions met with very different destinies. The first of the three – the one which was given to Watteau by the 19th century – was no longer in France from the 1780s on, because during those same years, it entered the collection of the Count-Bishop of Trent, Peter Vigil von Thun-Hohenstein, whose wax stamp is on the verso. From this Viennese collection it went to a German collection, before reappearing in Canada in the mid 20th century. The presence of the Bishop's wax seal on the verso makes it possible for this example to be located and followed. Direct comparison of this picture and the engraving also makes it possible to affirm that this example, which today is in a private collection (last known sales being Christie's, London, July 10th, 2015, no. 190), was at the origins of Halbou's engraving, because it is the only one to show the ox to the neck, whereas the two other known versions show the ox all the way to the chest. This means that the picture was in Paris in the 1760s under Boucher's name before leaving France and losing its attribution. It would seem difficult then to see it as the one described in the late 18th century in the Godefroy (1785), Vaudreuil (1787), and Montesquiou (1788) sales, and even less as the one in the sales of Lebrun in 1814, Maurice in 1835,

and Arago in 1872, especially as its measurements (29 x 38 cm / 11 7/16 x 15 in.) correspond to a smaller picture than the ones mentioned in these sales.

The second known version of *The Farmer's Children*, conserved in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore (inv. 37.391) is very close to the one studied here. Nonetheless, comparison demonstrates that our version is not an exact replica of Baltimore's. Although the entire composition and the important detail of the ox are comparable, the Baltimore version, a little larger than the one studied here (14 3/16 x 18 1/2 in. instead of 13 x 16 15/16 in.), is set differently, with the figures situated in a larger or broader environment than the one in the Bordes Gallery. The upper distance and the lower foreground are deeper, and the handling of the background landscape is less precise. The Baltimore picture was purchased in Rome by Henry Walters with the whole Massarati collection in 1902. It is difficult to say if the picture was always in Rome, in which case Boucher would have painted and sold it between 1728 and 1731, because it's known that he earned his living painting small pictures, or if it was painted in France upon his return in the second half of 1731. The hypothesis of an initial picture painting during the Italian sojourn is enticing, and the question is important, because if it was always in Rome, this picture could not be the version mentioned in the Godefroy, Vaudreuil and Montesquiou, Lebrun, Maurice, and Arago sales. Furthermore, the dimensions of the Baltimore picture do not correspond with those of the picture which stayed in France, because it is larger.

On the other hand, the 33 x 45 cm (13 x 17 in.) dimensions correspond with our picture. One can then justifiably suggest that this picture probably passed through the following sales: Godefroy, Nov. 15th-19th, 1785, lot 46; Comte de Vaudreuil, Nov. 26th, 1787, lot 76; Montesquiou, Dec. 9th, 1788, lot 234; Lebrun May 23rd, 1814, lot 17; Maurice, Feb. 2nd-3rd, 1835, lot 97; Arago, Feb. 8th, 1872, lot 5.

Françoise Joulie

¹ See Françoise Joulie, "Du peintre admiré au dessinateur méconnu, le regard du XVIII^e siècle français sur Jacopo Bassano," *Jacopo Bassano, i figli, la scuola, l'eredità*, Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studio, Bassano del Grappa, 2011, pp. 835 – 856, and for this picture, note 54.

² On the importance of replicas in François Boucher's œuvre, and the use of figures drawn from Bassano in the works of his youth, see F. Joulie, "Motiv, Kopie und Replik im Werk von Boucher," *François Boucher Künstler des Rokoko*, exh. cat. Karlsruhe, Wienand Editions, pp. 324-329.





Pierre-Alexandre WILLE

(Paris, 1748 - 1821)

2 | *Maternal Advice*

The Indulgent Mother

1172

Two oil paintings on copper laid down and set on panels forming pendants

Signed and dated upper right: *P.A. Wille filius / Pinxit 1772. / n° 5*

44 x 38 cm. (17 5/16 x 14 15/16 in.)

In their original sculpted gilt wood frame with pearl and foliated decoration and a shell-shaped pediment.

Provenance:

- Monsieur de Pille's study, c. 1775, according to Louis-Simon Lempereur's lettering under his engravings;
- His sale, Paris, May 2nd, 1785, no. 76: "*M. Wille. Deux tableaux, faisant pendants ; ils sont connus par les estampes gravées par Lempereur*" [M. Wille. Two pictures as pendants; they are known by engravings by Lempereur];
- Heim Gallery, London, *French Paintings & Sculptures of the 18th century*, Winter exhibition, January 10th – March 15th, 1968, nos. 22 & 23;
- Christie's Amsterdam, *Old Masters and 19th Century Art*, May 7th, 2013, lot no. 155;
- France, Private Collection.

Bibliography:

- Louis Hautecoeur, "Le sentimentalisme dans la peinture française," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, March 1909, p. 277.
- Louis Hautecoeur, "Pierre-Alexandre Wille le fils (1748-1821)," *Mélanges offerts à M. Henry Lemonnier*, Archives de l'art français, Paris, 1913, vol. VII, p. 448.
- ARIÈS Philippe, DUBY Georges (dir.), *Histoire de la vie privée. III: De la Renaissance aux Lumières*, Paris, Le Seuil, coll. "L'univers historique," 1986.
- *La Vie quotidienne à Paris dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle*, exh. cat. Museum of the History of France, National Archives, Paris, 1973.

Trained in artistic practices by his father, the engraver Johann Georg Wille (1715-1808), young Pierre-Alexandre demonstrated a precocious talent for handling a pencil. At age 13, he frequented Jean-Baptiste Greuze's studio (1725-1805) for two years, before entering that of Joseph-Marie Vien (1716-1809) whose teaching largely influenced the first years of his production. Under Greuze, he displayed his gift for depicting genre scenes which allowed him to be approved by the Academy on June 25th, 1774, "*an uneasy day which ended in joy and satisfaction*," approved "*with almost unanimous applause*" as a painter "*in the genre of domestic subjects*."

Wille exhibited at all of the Salons between 1775 and 1787. When the Revolution broke out, he joined the

National Guard until 1792. His following production during these troubled years remains complicated to define, but many drawings by his hand are dated until 1819.

The artist developed his own manner of combining the finesse of his pencil with that of his brush which allowed his work to be easily distinguished from that of his colleagues. He enjoyed perpetuating the tendency of sentimental portraits, studies of young girls, and family portraits, of which our two works are an excellent example. As opposed to Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Wille handled sensitive, but not dreadful or terrifying subjects. His touching scenes are exempt of the moralizing character in his teacher's work (*ill. 1*).





Ill. 1
Pierre-Alexandre WILLE
An Elegantly Dressed Lady Seated at a Table and Reading a Letter
Signed and dated upper center: *P.A. Wille.../1776 n° 22*
Oil on canvas
Private Collection.

In a bourgeois interior which became more and more common for him to depict, Wille evokes his sitters' social milieu through rich objects. The furniture shows artistic fashion of the period: a drop-leaf writing desk embellished with a Greek décor in exotic marquetry; a wing armchair with blue silk floral upholstery, and a dressing table on which stands a silver chocolate pitcher which reflects the luxury of colonial products.

Paris is rich in private mansions of the preceding century, and some have kept their sumptuous décor which still delights the most erudite eyes. As Madame de Sévigné described them in her letters, the pieces of furniture that adorned the apartments evoked their warm ambiance.

Midst the belongings of an antechamber, a mother and daughter are depicted twice.

In the first work, entitled *Maternal Advice*, a young woman clothed in morning undress slumps back in her chair and weakly holds out a letter with her left hand. Leaning on the armchair, her mother seems to share the pain expressed by the desolation in the daughter's face.

In the second, the painter invites the viewer to participate in the scene in which mother and daughter are facing us. The young girl, symbol of candor and obedience, is obediently seated on a straight oval-backed chair, and on her lap is holding what is called a Papillon dog [a Continental Toy Spaniel] whose ear she lifts between her fingers. Standing beside her and holding out her right hand, her mother proudly indicates her richly adorned daughter as a symbol of success: she wears a necklace made of four rows of pearls, a silk satin dress, as well as a lace and organdy fanchon bonnet embellished in the middle by a pink silk rose.

Like many of his contemporaries, Wille was broadly inspired by the Dutch masters who were in fashion during the 18th century. He introduced some characteristic elements of nordic genre scenes into his works, such as half-length figures depicted in warm interiors whose cleverly mastered light makes it possible to concentrate the attention on facial expressions. The costumes, as well as the highly finished silks seems to be taken from the repertoires of Gerard Ter Borch (1617-1781) or Gabriel Metsu (1629-1667) in the reproduction of the satin silk mantel trimmed with fur which the mother wears in *The Indulgent Mother* (ill. 2). Some carefully selected details also refer back to the work of Dutch masters, such as the little Papillon dog's lifted ear, which one can find in the work of Frans van Mieris (1635-1681) (ill. 3).







Ill. 2
 Gabriel METSU (1629-1667)
Young Lady Writing a Letter
 Oil on panel
 c. 1662-64
 39.4 x 31.1 cm. (15 ½ x 12 ¼ in.)
 The Leiden Collection, New York (inv. GM-110).



Ill. 3
 Frans van MIERIS (1635-1681)
A Man and a Woman with Two Dogs, known as "Teasing the Pet"
 1660
 Oil on panel
 25.5 x 20 cm. (10 x 7 ⅞ in.)
 The Hague, Mauritshuis (inv. 108).

The success of the two works owes a lot to the work of Louis-Simon Lempereur's who engraved two works on copper in 1775 and exhibited them in the Salon of 1777 under numbers 276 and 277 (*ill. 4 & 5*).

*"It appears that a very pretty print engraved by M. Lempereur, Engraver to the King and to L.L.M.M. Imper. and King, after the original picture by M. Wille (son of the famous engraver) which is in the study of M. de Pille or du Pille. It is entitled, "The Indulgent Mother;" and this title, without pronouncing its subject, indicates it clearly enough (...)."*¹

Wille was praised for his luminous color and technical finesse, which is accentuated here by the choice of copper as a support.

Throughout his career, Pierre-Alexandre Wille remained true to the sentimental painting which his master had taught him. A manifesto of the art of bourgeois living, this vision as a whole concurs with easy living in the 18th century, in contrast to the aristocratic visions of the preceding century.

M.O.

¹ "Affiches, annonces et avis divers" ["Posters, announcements, and various opinions"]. Fifth weekly paper or rag of Wed. January 31st, 1776, n° 5, p.19.



Ill. 4

Louis-Simon LEMPEREUR (1728–1807)

After a work by Pierre-Alexandre Wille (1748–1821)

The Indulgent Mother

c. 1775

42.9 x 33.8 cm. (16 7/8 x 13 3/16 in.)

Lettered with names of producers, publication details:

“A Paris chez Lempereur (...) rue et Porte St Jacques, au dessus du petit Marché,”

title and dedication to the Count of Angiviller, in French.

London, The British Museum (inv. 1928,0618.36).



III. 5
 Louis-Simon LEMPEREUR (1728–1807)
 After the work by Pierre-Alexandre Wille (1748–1821)
Maternal Advice
 c. 1777
 Etching with copper plate on paper
 36 x 31 cm. (14 ³/₁₆ x 12 ³/₁₆ in.)
 Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences

Charles-François Grenier de Lacroix, called LACROIX DE MARSEILLE

(Marseilles, c. 1700 – Berlin, 1782)

3 | *View of the Bay of Naples with Vesuvius Erupting*

1763

Oil on canvas

Signed, situated, and dated on a rock, lower left: *De Lacroix Roma 1763*

62.5 x 97 cm. (24 5/16 x 38 1/4 in.)

Provenance:

- England, Private Collection.

Bibliography:

- Marianne Roland Michel, *Des Monts et des Eaux : paysages de 1715 à 1850*, Cailleux Gallery, Presses artistiques, Paris, 1980-81.
- Florence Ingersoll-Smousse, *Joseph Vernet, peintre de marine, 1714-1789, étude critique suivie d'un catalogue raisonné de son œuvre peint*, Étienne Bignou, ed., Paris, 1926.

Charles-François Grenier de Lacroix, known as *Lacroix de Marseille*, was a marine painter who enjoyed quite a reputation during his lifetime. Inspired by the famous Claude-Joseph Vernet, whose pupil he was in Rome under the name of “Della Croce,” Lacroix developed his own clientele by bringing a certain kind of preciousness to his works. Thus he was able to extend his Italian sojourn and remain for some twenty years, although the exact dates remain to be determined.

In Naples, the capital of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, Lacroix de Marseilles found his greatest source of inspiration: the bay is an excellent exercise for landscape painters. The view here gives us a spectacular panorama of the city and of Vesuvius, which was sublimely fascinating on account of its eruptions and the tragic consequences it had had on Herculaneum and Pompeii in 79 C.E.

In addition to depicting the sea, which he loved and knew very well, the rocky coastline is systematically animated by characters skillfully punctuating the composition with a few splashes of color. In a customary schema, the artist places the figures going about their tasks in the foreground oblivious to the extraordinary display behind them.

A natural poetry emanates from his work, whether it's at night or in the day or, as here, at twilight with the whole bay bathed in the warm orange hues of sunset. The calm peacefulness of this image is offset by the spectacular



Ill. 1.

Charles-François Grenier de Lacroix, called Lacroix de Marseille

Vesuvius Erupting

Oil on canvas

49.3 x 73.9 cm. (19 7/16 x 29 1/8 in.)

Signed and dated on the wall of the pier supporting a cannon, lower right: *Delacroix/1767*

Exhibition: *Des Monts et des Eaux: paysages de 1715 à 1850*, Cailleux Gallery, Paris, 1980-1981, n°12.

eruption in the background which is as terrifying as it is grandiose.

Lacroix de Marseille is one of the landscape painters whose attention to detail invites him to integrate Vesuvius as the principal subject of his large-scale compositions: the volcano closes the composition and





Ill. 2

Charles-François Grenier de Lacroix, called Lacroix de Marseille

Eruption of Vesuvius at Night seen from a Shoreline

Oil on canvas

32 x 43 cm. (12 3/8 x 16 15/16 in.)

Signed and dated, lower left: *Delacroix / 1770*

Artcurial Sale, June 9th, 2021. (13 Nov 2015, no. 33)

frames the field of vision. Constantly changing, it is also a terrific outdoor painting exercise and a constant challenge for a painter.

*“The storm clouds rapidly pass over the column of fire, and sometimes hide it partially or completely, and others reveal it in all its splendor, the different shades produced by the reflection of the light on the white clouds (...):”*¹

Many artists thus depicted Vesuvius as a definition of Neapolitan identity for a clientele of tourists on the Grand Tour.

Vesuvius entered into eruption in 1766, three years after the creation of our picture. One can easily imagine that Lacroix de Marseille was still in Naples that year, because he dated another canvas also depicting the volcano in 1767 (*ill. 1*). Most of the artist’s works which have come down to us depicting this natural spectacle were taken at night (*ill. 2*), whereas this view constitutes rare evidence of an eruption in the daytime.

Bursting with details, our picture is a combination of high artistic quality and rigorous almost scientific representation. Very clear and legible, Lacroix’ coloristic eloquence enables him to transcribe faithfully the image which is before him of blazing smoke and escaping lava shooting out of the volcano. Beyond the volcano which captures the viewer’s attention, the artist also endows the sea with its most brilliant luster with beautiful reflections of the ship silhouettes.

Among the many 18th-century marine painters, Charles-François Grenier de Lacroix deserves a special place

for the remarkable quality and liveliness of his works which his mentor Joseph Vernet recognized: some of the master’s signed paintings are in fact the result of his pupil’s skillful brushwork.

*“The eruption the next day was surely the most terrific and alarming, but this one is so beautiful and sublime that even the most fertile imagination would not know how to paint it.”*²

The artist rises to the challenge several times in depicting the sublime tragedy of the eruption of Vesuvius, a precious historic document for scholars today.

M.O.

¹ Letter from William Hamilton to Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society of London. Naples, October 1st, 1779. Cited by G. Briganti in *Hamilton, W. Campi Phlegraei, Naples, 1776-1779*, annotated edition by G. Briganti, Naples, 1985, p. 77.

² *Ibid.*







Jean-Baptiste GREUZE

(Tournus, 1725 – Paris, 1805)

4 | *Self-Portrait*

c. 1785

Oil on oval canvas

61.5 x 51 cm. (24 3/16 x 20 in.)

Provenance:

- France, Private Collection.

Bibliography:

- Jean Martin, *Œuvre de J.-B. Greuze : catalogue raisonné, suivi de la liste des gravures exécutées d'après ses ouvrages*, H. Piazza, Paris, 1905, pp. 70-71.

“This talent for expressing the passions on canvas is very rare, and Mr. Greuze carries it to the highest degree.”

An incomparable draughtsman who kept his distance from French rococo taste which he judged too frivolous, Jean-Baptiste Greuze emphasized the glorification of his subjects' feelings which he thought should lift the viewer's soul. Trained in the studio of the Lyonnais master Charles Grandon (1691-1762), whom he followed to Paris in 1750, Greuze subsequently received lessons from Charles-Joseph Natoire (1700-1777) at the Academy. He did not take the official route of competing for the *Grand Prix de Rome*, but nonetheless was approved (*agréé*) in 1755, thanks to his *Father of the Family Reading the Bible to his Children* (Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. RF 2016 3).

After a sojourn in Italy from which he only retained his work on facial expressions, Greuze initiated a new genre which left the critics overwhelmed. It consisted of genre scenes in which the arrangement of elements evoked the grand tradition of history painting, but in which expression of sentimental feelings reigned, an interest which was unprecedented in French painting and came out of multiple drawings from life. Known for his genre scenes, Greuze was also a talented portraitist whose commissions multiplied and who liked to depict children. Among these figures, the artist realized a few private portraits, that is, his own self-portraits.

“Greuze, says M. Lecarpentier, who knew him, was of medium height; he had a strong head, a very broad forehead, lively and well separated eyes, a spiritual face.

*His manner spoke of candor and a man of genius; it was even difficult not to say: “Here is Greuze, almost without ever having seen him.”*²²

In essence, self-portraits do not require commissions. They are personal, intimate works exempt from all artifice, appreciated for the psychological exercise they procure. Of this production, history has retained more than ten portraits of Greuze “by him himself” realized all through his career.

The first known example is dated around the year 1763 (*ill. 1*). Through a very sketchy technique similar to our work, the artist presents himself to the view in studio attire, slightly turned three-quarters to the right, his face seen straight on: a position which the artist assumed in most of his self-portraits. This first version depicts the artist at about 40 years old, vigorous, when his flamboyant production was flourishing.

More than a portrait, self-portraits reflect not just the person, but also the artist: the flat surface incarnates the dialogue between a painter and his mirror. Beyond aesthetic qualities, the work thus posits the artist's reflections on his own condition. In comparison to the version conserved in the Louvre (*ill. 2*), our unpublished work could date to around the year 1785. Greuze was then about 60 years old, he appears more fragile and diminished, but his calm gaze communicates a certain self-confidence. As was his custom, Greuze shows himself bust length and turned three-quarters to the right. His white curly hair is lightly powdered. Under his brown jacket with its blue turned-down collar, he wears a





Ill. 1
Self-Portrait
 Oil on wood
 c. 1760
 Paris, Louvre Museum (inv. MI 1071)



Ill. 2
Self-Portrait
 Oil on canvas
 c. 1785
 73 x 59 cm. (28 ¾ x 23 ¼ in.)
 Paris, Louvre Museum (inv. 5034)



Ill. 3
Portrait of François Babuti
 Salon de 1761
 Oil on canvas
 59.7 x 48.2 cm. (23 ½ x 20 in.)
 Private Collection

flowing white cravat and a lace jabot caught in a yellow vest.

Greuze doesn't hide the physical traces of his age so as not to risk mishandling the dialogue with himself. He even seems to have a certain sympathy for the depiction of profiles of older men as can be seen in the portrait of his father-in-law François Babuti in 1761 (*ill. 3*).

This last phase of the artist's career gives way to a sketchier handling of his subjects: the artist abandons precision in lines and contours while privileging the use of color as an element for expressing the passions on canvas. The minute work in achieving a faithful depiction of flesh through touches of pink, which are sometimes brushed, and sometimes supple and enveloping, can be appreciated in our *Self-Portrait*. Special attention is given to the treatment of the face and even more so, to the psychological intensity of the serene gaze.

Although a certain austerity emanates from the work, the overall vision tends to gentleness and (sensual) pleasure: the limited chromatic range highlighted by the neck of the jacket with its blue turned-down collar is delicately handled with a few skillful long brush strokes. The gentle sensation is reinforced by the oval format of the work, as well as by the quick lines which define, on the one hand,

the solid pale coppery green background, and on the other, the rest of the torso, blended in shades of brown, symbolic of a modesty which he radiates.

*"(...) above all, his portrait which he just painted of himself is applauded."*³

Jean-Baptiste Greuze's delicate painting is touching to the eye and soul of the curious viewer who is intrigued by the gentle sensual brushwork which the painter demonstrates in each of his pictures. A painter of laborious felicity, of drama, of childhood, but above all, of portraits, Greuze was an artist who addressed the sensitivity of his time, depicted and personified feelings on the flat surface of the canvas: an ingeniousness which led to his success and glory.

M.O.

¹ Anonymous, "Exposition de peintures, sculptures et gravures," *L'Année littéraire*, supplement, 1761 (Deloynes n° 1272).

² Charles Blanc "Étude sur Greuze," *L'Artiste Greuze sa vie et son œuvre Sa statue Le musée Greuze*, 1868, p. 119.

³ C.-L. F. Lecarpentier, *Notice sur Greuze lu dans la séance de la Société libre d'Emulation de Rouen*, [Rouen], 1805, p. 7.



François Boucher

(Paris, 1703-1770)

5 | *Flora and a Follower*

c. 1745

Oil on canvas, relined in the 20th century.

81 x 121 cm. (2 ft. 7 7/8 in. x 3 ft. 11 5/8 in)

Beautiful sculpted gilt wood frame decorated with acanthus leaves, shells, curleques, and flowerettes, Louis XV period

Provenance:

- France, probably an element in the decoration of a palace in Champagne;
- Private Collection.

This picture necessitated an in-depth examination in order to understand the way it had been originally conceived, as recent interventions had modified its format and appearance. It turns out to be the second version of a signed *Flora* belonging to a group of five pictures, certain of which are dated 1745, all of which were painted for Madame de Pompadour, were at Bellevue, and today are scattered. The five pictures are *The Love Letter* which is a large over door, and four smaller pendants all the same size entitled *Flora*, *Bacchantes*, *Pomona*, and *Nymph Huntresses* which fit into fretted wood paneling. *Flora*, the first version preceding the one studied here and reproduced in Ananoff and Wildenstein, 1975, I, no. 287, is conserved in a private collection, as are two other compositions from this group. The other two are in the De Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco. For some of these pictures, and especially the *Nymph Huntresses*, several versions exist.

Comparison of the first *Flora* (hereinafter for clarity called “Pompadour *Flora*”) with the second version which just reappeared, is instructive. On the canvas acquired by Madame de Pompadour, the group is larger in size than the one studied here, because in its narrower frame, it already measured 116 x 96 cm. (3 ft. 9 1/16 in. x 3 ft. 1 13/16 in.). The first example is almost square in its fretted wainscoting; the second today is presented in a rectangular format. This rectangular shape is recent: until the 19th century, the work had been inscribed in an oval, whose point marks can still be perceived in places. To go from this oval to a rectangular form, the edges of the picture were unfolded and the released corners repainted in

monochrome shades in the 20th century. The picture also was relined, maybe at the same time as its shape was changed. More recently, apparently in 2006, varnish was removed from the picture, and this process caused – as is often the case with Boucher – the relative loss of transparent glazes nourished by brown and red pigments which the artist always used by drowning them in varnish so as to give depth and flesh tones. Under these recent varnishes, the restorer-conservator Catherine Polnec confirms having found the whole to be in a good state of conservation and a beautiful overall technical quality in keeping with what is known of the artist’s excellent craftsmanship.

Once this issue of modern varnish has been removed, she confirmed that, aside from the four modified corners, the whole picture is by the same hand and, judging from its original canvas and the pigments used, from the 18th century. Aside from the quality of the hand, various elements stand out in the comparison between the two versions which confirm that the second version could be an autograph work. Thus the fretwork of the paneling for the first version of *Flora* for Madame de Pompadour hides various motifs which are masterfully placed here: the lengthening of the legs of *Flora*’s follower in conformity with Boucher’s drawings of the same subject; the equilibrium of the yellow drapery on which *Flora* is seated despite her larger size; the crown of flowers together with its underlying placement still visible under the floral decoration; freedom in the decor of clouds and trees – one sees above *Flora*’s head, for example, leaves hiding part of a light white cloud; and especially the importance given in the foreground





to the bouquet of very well executed large acanthus leaves, [something] very frequent in Boucher since the years around 1735 but [which] does not exist at all in the other painting.

Along with this liberty in relation to the first painting, a very precise knowledge of the Pompadour *Flora* can be noticed, for example, in the mention of a light ribbon forming a crown between Flora's fingers although the ribbon is difficult to see, a fact which makes it possible to affirm that the second version was made with full knowledge of the first. Aside from the existing additions in the second picture, several differences can be seen in the handling [of the brush] in the parts directly taken from one to the other, for example, in the detail of the flowers or the leaf décor on the left, or the follower's left breast. This ease in brushing the same motifs a little differently expresses the painter's freedom in relation to his model, a fact which definitively orients [us] to an original version and not a copy. The rapidity of the brushstroke which is visible everywhere (blouse sleeve, yellow drapery, blue on the knee), the density of the brush and the underlying placement still visible in places (Flora's leg) also tend in the sense of a second original.

The pigments utilized are those of Boucher's ordinary palette: although the reds added around the fingers to mark flesh tones are slightly weakened by the devarnishing in the 2000s, Boucher's whole palette can be found in the rest of the painting, especially these blacks which the artist mastered perfectly, as opposed to his contemporaries, as well as these very efficient whites, falling from above first on Flora's shoulders, and then on the follower's breast and the legs of the two women. Concerning the detail of placing whites, the contour of the leaves evokes the artist's vegetal drawings in which the edge of leaves in light is solely handled in whites. In general, the finesse in handling details, as well as the differentiation of the medium, have a remarkable expressivity: for example, one notes the lightness of Flora's hair curled over her forehead; the elegance of the bouquet barely posed in her hand, except for a red flower which echoes the other reds in the picture (flowers, lips and cheeks of the two women, hair ribbon, nipples), the rapidity of brushstroke expressing the follower's blond hair by drawing a thick brush the full length to differentiate Flora's much finer black hair from the blondes; the touch of white in the eye; the suppleness of Flora's shoulder in which her contour oscillates gently under the brush; the lightness and frothiness of this same

brush in the draperies of the lower part...

Despite enlargement, recent relining and devarnishing, the whole piece merits being re-established as an autograph work. The harmonious presence of elements which are absent from the other picture, the many variations between the two, the detail of effects, the particular use of certain pigments, the placement of shadows, the real freedom of execution all lead to seeing a second original version. François Boucher realized many second versions at the request of collectors, shortly after producing the first picture;¹ these first and second versions are not necessarily signed; the second generally has neither under-drawing nor *pentimenti*, because done entirely by memory, a fact which explains certain slight variations which a servile copyist would have obviously avoided.

It is difficult to say where the 18th century picture was located, especially as its dimensions and format have changed. It was probably a picture inserted into fretted wooden paneling or wainscoting.

Françoise Joulie

¹ F. Joulie, "Motiv, Kopie und Replik in Werk von Boucher," *Francois Boucher*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, 2020, pp. 324 - 329.





Jean-Baptiste LEPRINCE

(Metz, 1734 – Saint-Denis-du-Port, 1781)

6 | *Rest on the Flight to Egypt (recto)* *Sketch of a Landscape with a Peasant and his Donkey (verso)*

1769

Black chalk, sanguine, grey and sanguine wash on watermarked paper with a crowned fleur-de-lys blazon

Signed and dated lower right: *le Prince 1769*

34.8 x 32.1 cm. (13 1/16 x 12 5/8 in.)

Provenance:

- France, Private Collection.

Bibliography:

- *Jean-Baptiste Le Prince (Metz, 1734 - Saint-Denis du Port, 1781): le voyage en Russie: collections de la ville de Rouen*, exh. cat. Museum of Fine Arts, Drawings Department, Rouen, 2004.
- *Jean-Baptiste Le Prince*, exh. cat. Éditions du Musée de Metz, Museum of Modern Art, 1988.
- Mary-Elizabeth Hellyer, *Recherches sur Jean-Baptiste Le Prince (1734-1781)*, Doctoral Thesis, Art History and Archaeology, Paris IV, 1982.
- Jules Hedou, *Jean Le Prince et son œuvre*, Baur and Rapilly, Paris, 1879.
- Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, Gilles Demarteau, *Principes du dessin dans le genre du paysage, A Paris chés Demarteau Graveur du Roi, rue de la Pelterie, à la Cloche*, Paris, c. 1773.

Jean-Baptiste Le Prince spent his childhood in the city of Metz, and was the son of a master cabinet maker-sculptor and gilder, a fact which probably caused his precocious taste for the arts to develop. By adolescence, the young man's skill in drawing was noticed by the Maréchal de Belle-Isle, military governor, and it is undoubtedly under his protection that Le Prince entered François Boucher's studio in Paris. His first drawings can be dated to the years 1755-1757, when the artist did some work on the Abbé de Saint-Non's etchings under the patronage of Jean-Honoré Fragonard and Hubert Robert.

The first examples of his graphic work attest to his master's influence in their depictions of French landscapes enlivened by figures. His personality is already asserted in the precise rendering of nature which he conserved throughout his career.

At the age of 22, Le Prince went to Saint Petersburg upon convocation by the Imperial Chancellery of Buildings to join the workshop of painters decorating Empress Elisabeth's apartments in the Winter Palace. Commissions for him to do 45 over doors for the Tsarina and 39 for Peter III in the fashion of the day – that is to say, allegories, mythological scenes and landscapes –

can be found in the archives. Following Catherine II's ascension to the throne, the painter traveled throughout the Russian Empire before returning to France in 1763:

“Le Prince's delicate health did not adapt well to this rigorous temperature, and near the end of 1763, he had to return to France under the threat of succumbing to the effects of an illness that got worse every day.”¹

After these ten years spent abroad, Le Prince returned with an ample collection of drawings from nature which was then useful to him when he introduced himself to the Academy. He was received there “with general approval” as a master of genre scenes, as is mentioned in the *Correspondance littéraire* of 1765.

His “Russeries” were highly appreciated, especially by Diderot who encouraged the artist on the occasion of his first Salon the same year. Le Prince was broadly praised for his talents in the graphic arts.

With the engraver Gilles Demarteau, specialist in facsimiles of pencil work, the artist brought out *Principes du dessin dans le genre du paysage*² (Principles of Drawing





Ill. 1
Jean-Baptiste LEPRINCE
The Prophet Punished for his Disobedience
Pen, bistre, wash, and white highlights on blue paper
30.7 x 41.6 cm. (12 1/16 x 16 3/8 in.)
Vienna, Albertina Museum (inv. 12338)

in the Genre of Landscape). The work demonstrates the importance the artist gave to studying nature that our work also evokes, in that nature takes up most of the composition. His production reveals the influence of Dutch art from the preceding century, especially that of Rembrandt, of whom the artist owned 73 engravings by or after the master, and of Wouwerman, [a record of] whose entire oeuvre he owned in the form of engravings by Jean Moyreau. In Le Prince's landscapes, the place given to figures is minimal. They enliven the scene without ever supplanting the role of Nature (*ill. 1*). Among the drawings in the original holdings of the Albertina Museum in Vienna, the work entitled *Landscape with Shepherds*, (*ill. 2*), is an example. At the Salon of the same year, Dupont de Nemours found he had "*the merits of the French and Flemish Schools combined*."³ Without real certainty, it is possible that the iconography of our drawing could be related to an episode in the New Testament of the Rest of the Virgin, Joseph and the Child in his cradle, accompanied by their donkey during their flight from Judea to Egypt (*Matthew, 2, 13-23*).

From his Nordic influences, Le Prince retained the foreshortening of figures seen from behind, such as the man depicted here in the foreground. As opposed to his contemporaries, Vigée-Le Brun, Tocqué, and Doyen whose work had been exported from France to Russia, Le Prince did the opposite. Diderot, at the Salon of 1767, while praising the artist's concern for precision in the depictions of his figures' attire, evoked his main merit as "*the one who dressed well*."⁴ In the group of figures in the lower left, the female figure facing the viewer wears



Ill. 2
Jean-Baptiste LEPRINCE
Landscape with Shepherds, 1777
Black chalk
26.2 x 38.9 cm. (10 1/16 x 15 1/16 in.)
Vienna, Albertina Museum (inv. 12345)

a headdress framing her face similar to a Kokochnik reminiscent of popular Russian costumes. In terms of Dutch influence, the conception of the foliage is comparable to that of Salomon van Ruysdael, van Goyen and even Cornelis Decker, some of whose paintings were in his possession. Le Prince "*had his own manner of rendering the foliage of oaks with art and great verity*."⁵ The compositional balance is established through a few skillful masses of tufted branches rising and forming verdant fans which seem to move with the wind, thus energizing everything. After that, the artist works on foliage details with fine strokes of wash and sanguine which give the desired volume. Willows, beaches, oaks, Le Prince observes Nature which he sketches on site. His hand renders the particular shapes of leaves, as well as those of the tree trunks with great acuity, thus making it possible to distinguish the different tree species, such as the beech in our composition.

Friends with Renou, Pajou, Wille, and Fragonard among others, Le Prince was a painter who enjoyed a great reputation in his lifetime. He was also associated with the art of tapestry for which he produced six cartoons of Russian Games for the Beauvais Manufactory.

M.O.

¹ Jules Hedou, *Jean Le Prince et son œuvre*, Baur and Rapilly, Paris, 1879, p.27.

² Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, Gilles Demarteau, *Principes du dessin dans le genre du paysage*, A Paris chés Demarteau Graveur du Roi, rue de la Pelterie, à la Cloche, Paris, c. 1773.

³ Dupont de Nemours (ed. 1908), p. 58 (Salon of 1777).

⁴ Sez nec and Adhémar, III, p. 218 (Salon of 1767), 1963.

⁵ Lecarpentier, 1821, p. 296.



Joseph CHINARD

Lyon, 1756 – 1813

7 | *Bust Portrait of Juliette Récamier*

c. 1802-1803

Terracotta bust with patina

On low pedestal

Signed and dated on the base of the pedestal: *Chinard à Lyon l'An XI* ("Chinard in Lyon Year XI")

Height: 69 cm. (2 ft. 3 3/16 in.)

Provenance:

- Probably exhibited in Paris, Grand Palais, 1900;
- France, Private Collection.

Bibliography:

- S. PACCOUD, *Juliette Récamier, muse et mécène*, exh. cat. Lyon, Museum of Fine Arts, Paris 2009.
- M. ROCHER-JAUNEAU, "Joseph Chinard et les bustes de Madame Récamier," *Bulletin des Musées et Monuments lyonnais*, July 1966, pp. 25 – 37.
- *Catalogue des sculptures par Joseph Chinard de Lyon formant la collection de Penha-Longa*, Paris: Georges Petit Gallery, Sale, Dec. 2, 1911, no. 34 (Cognacq-Jay) and no. 35 (plaster).
- Paul VITRY, *Exposition d'oeuvres du sculpteur Chinard de Lyon (1756-1813)*, exh. cat. Paris, Pavillon de Marsan, Nov. 1909 – Jan. 1910, Paris: É. Lévy, 1909.

Joseph Chinard was educated in Lyon and Rome; a first prize at the Academy of St. Luke in 1786 helped establish his reputation. Active in his native city, he was welcomed with success at the Salon of Paris starting in 1798. Professor at the Lyon School of Fine Arts and Correspondent for the Institute, Chinard adapted with talent to the taste of his time. Excellent in the realization of busts, he executed many portraits for Napoleon's family; for a while he occupied a workshop in Carrara, whose quarries were directed by Elisa Bonaparte. Chinard spent the end of his life in Lyon, while still exhibiting regularly in Paris.

The face of our young woman combines canons dear to the artist: similar oval chin, almond-shaped eyes, and high cheekbones can be seen, for example, in the *Portrait of a Woman* conserved in the Louvre Museum (1802). While the sculptor tended to idealize his sitters' physiognomy – which does not facilitate identification – he nonetheless enjoyed giving close attention to the originality of their attire and adornment for which his family background certainly may be significant. Chinard was the son of a textile merchant and married an embroiderer.

In keeping with refined court fashions at the very beginning of the 19th century, our young woman wears a finely pleated dress tightened by a mascaron which emphasizes the bosom. Her hair is tied with a ribbon; strands curl over her forehead. A comb embellished with pearls holds her veil which descends on each side of the pedestal. The passementerie is used entirely for discreet elegance. Worked braid borders the veil, another emphasizes the low neckline and the ends of the tassel-fringed sleeves.

The identification of our work is connected with another version of the bust, conserved in the Cognacq-Jay Museum. Formerly in the Penha-Longa collection, it was exhibited in the Marsan Pavillon in 1909-1910 under the title, "*Bust of a Young Girl Wearing a starred veil.*" It was associated with Juliette Recamier in 1911, at the sale of the collection at the Georges Petit Gallery. Germain Bapst, author of the catalogue, wrote then,

"In 1805, when Chinard went to Paris, he lived with the Recamiers, rue Basse-du-Rempart, and had his mail addressed there. During his stay, Chinard executed a new bust of his favorite sitter for which M. De Penha-Longa owns the terracotta sketch and the original plaster."





Ill. 1
Joseph Chinard
Bust of Juliette Recamier
Carrara marble
Height 80 cm. (2 ft. 7 ½ in.)
Lyon, Museum of Fine Arts (inv. B 871)



Ill. 2
Joseph Chinard
Bust portrait of Juliette Recamier
After 1801
Marble
Height 60.6 cm. (1 ft. 11 ⅞ in.)
United States, Rhode Island School of Design Museum
(inv. 37.201)

Multiple details differentiate our version from the one in the Cognacq-Jay: the starred veil becomes smooth, but the border braid is wider and enriched with pearls and palmettos. The one which covers the bosom is framed by two fine torsades.

As celebrated for her beauty as for her wit, Juliette Recamier held a famous Salon at the end of the Directory and the Consulate which raised her to the level of an icon. A close friend of Benjamin Constant, Chateaubriand, and Madame de Staël which caused her to go into exile, Madame Recamier was muse, sitter, patron, and collector, all in one. She proved to be quite attentive to her image, which fascinated the artists of her time, and only the most brilliant among them, such as David or Gérard, succeeded in capturing.

Although sources differ on dates, they agree in affirming the bonds that united the Recamier family and Chinard. The sculptor, who portrayed her several times, is responsible for the most famous effigy of her (Museum of Fine Arts, Lyon, *ill. 1*); Rhode Island School of Design (*ill. 2*). He also apparently worked in Paris during the years which followed the young girl's marriage in 1793 when she was only 15 years old. Chinard presented her with her hair lifted by a long ribbon, nudity sketched by a cloth which she holds with crossed arms. There she is still almost a child, whereas our model shows a woman in full bloom, as Madame Recamier could have been at age twenty-five in the early 1800s.

M. B.





Chumard a Lyon l'an XII



Pierre-Antoine DEMACHY

(Paris, 1723-1807)

8 | *View of the Colonnade of the Louvre Enlivened with Figures*

Oil on prepared panel repaired with oakum

35.7 x 54.3 cm (14 1/16 x 21 3/8 in.)

Provenance:

- France, Private Collection.

Exhibition:

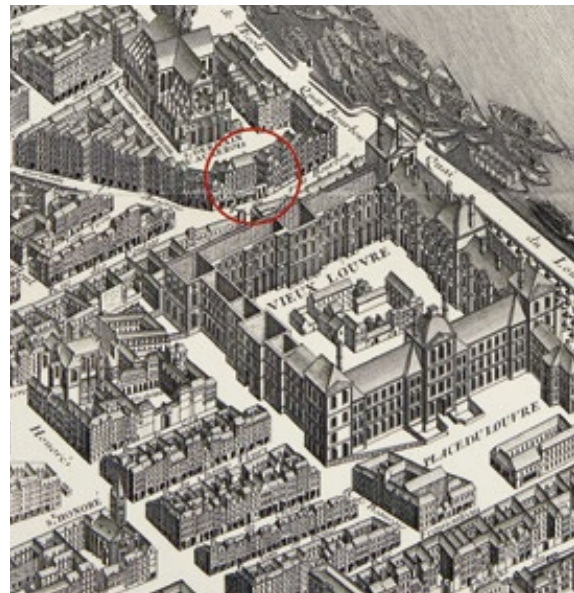
- Probably Salon of 1793, *La Colonnade du Louvre & ses Environs, ornés de Figures. Point de Vue pris du côté de la rue d'Angiviller*, under no. 109 [The Colonnade of the Louvre and its Surroundings embellished with Figures. Point of view taken from beside the Street of Angiviller]

Bibliography:

- Françoise Roussel-Leriche and Marie Pełkowska Le Roux, *Le témoin méconnu: Pierre-Antoine Demachy, 1723-1807*, [exh. cat.], Lambinet Museum, Magellan et Co, Paris, 2014.
- Jean-Pierre Babelon, *La Vie quotidienne à Paris dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle*, [exh. cat.], Museum of the History of France, National Archives: Society of Friends of the Archives, Paris, 1973.
- Félix Lazare, Louis Lazare, *Dictionnaire administratif et historique des rues de Paris et de ses monuments* (extracts of Letters patent), Félix Lazare, Paris, 1844.

The son of a journeyman carpenter, Pierre-Antoine Demachy developed his innate ability for drawing and perspective under Giovanni Niccolo Servandoni, decorator and architect established in Paris since 1724. As opposed to his contemporaries Joseph Vernet (1714-1789) or Hubert Robert (1733-1808), Pierre-Antoine Demachy found nothing interesting in narrative landscapes or imaginary ruins emerging from a mixture of French education and Italian experience. The artist was a fervent defender of the city of Paris where he was born, lived, and died in 1807. As both an observer of daily life and an architectural and landscape painter, Demachy found his main source of inspiration in this city. Approved for the Academy in 1755 and then received as a painter of architecture three years later, Demachy exhibited in the Salon until 1802.

Urban development constituted one of the great 18th century phenomena. The large cities experienced unprecedented demographic expansion which led to notable architectural transformations. In Paris, the Louvre quarter experimented in big changes. In the second half of the 18th century, Demachy lived in the palace area and in striving rigorously to render the view



Ill. 1

Plan of Paris, called "Turgot's Plan" after 1739 After Michel-Étienne Turgot (1690-1751) commissioned, plan drawn up by Louis Bretez (16.. - 1738) cartographer.





Ill. 2
 Pierre-Antoine Demachy
Clearing the Colonnade of the Louvre
 Oil on paper laid down on panel
 Paris, Carnavalet Museum (inv. P91).

in front of him, he gave witness to daily life as it appeared before his eyes. The artist especially appreciated the view of the square of the Louvre which was simultaneously an architectural and historic edifice, a royal square, and a meeting place. He produced body-colors and oils on paper of it, as well as about twenty paintings before, during, and after the clearance of buildings in front of the colonnade.

When Louis XIV abandoned the Louvre to live at Versailles, a microcosm gradually settled into the enclosure. Seedy joints and publicans moved in and soon Minister Pontchartrain complained that “*the courtyards of the Louvre are used for the most infamous prostitution and debauchery.*” After such licentiousness, the Marquis of Marigny, Superintendent of the King’s Buildings, gave orders in 1758 for work to clear a space in front of the palace and thus force the population, such as the people depicted in the foreground of our picture, to move back from it. This first stage of terracing led to the open square of the Louvre that we know today.

A historic piece of evidence, our picture depicts the square before the last buildings were totally destroyed in the last years of the 18th century. On the right side of the composition, it is still in fact possible to perceive some of the dwellings which formed the cloister of the church of Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois and part of the *Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon* (ill. 1). The Carnavalet Museum in Paris

conserves another painted work by the artist taken during the work of clearing the square to let part of the Louvre colonnade appear (ill. 2).

Demachy was careful to depict the architectural edifices as accurately as possible. In the background of the composition, from right to left can be detected the Parisian monetary workshop connected with the Crown, today the Paris Mint, followed on the left by the College of Four Nations whose dome dominates the Seine and which today houses the seat of the Institute of France. Further back, the two towers of Saint Sulpice Church appear, and then those of the Abbey of Saint Germain des Près. Until 1820, the abbey’s transept was flanked by two towers which were higher than the bell tower over the entrance porch. After much mutilation suffered during the Revolution, the two towers which had become too unstable and risked collapsing were torn down.

In 1793, Demachy exhibited “*The Colonnade of the Louvre & its Surroundings, embellished with Figures. Point of View taken from the side of the rue d’Angiviller,*” whose architectural description corresponds to the point of view chosen for our work. Created in 1780, the *rue d’Angiviller* was situated in the former 4th arrondissement of Paris and disappeared with the creation of the Rue de Rivoli in 1854.

An excerpt from the letters patent describes this transformation:



Ill. 3

Victor-Jean Nicolle (1754-1826)

View of the Palace of the Louvre, taken from the Rue d'Angiviller, in Paris

c. 1810

Rueil-Malmaison, National Museums of Malmaison

(inv. MM.40.47.9043.36).

“Louis, etc..., wishes and pleases what follows: at the expense of Sirs Navau and Company, a street will be opened [which will be] 24 feet wide whose alignment will be straight and the two sides parallel, on the land which belongs to them, between the rue des Poulies and that of the Oratory. It will be named the rue d'Angiviller, and its entrance will be at one end of the corner of said Rue des Poulies and the square of the Louvre Colonnade, and the other in the Rue de l'Oratoire, as close as possible to this Saint-Honoré, etc. Given at Versailles, the 12th day of the month of May in the year of grace 1780 and in the seventh of our reign. Signed Louis.”¹

On the right in our picture, part of a wall can be seen which is topped with trees. It is the garden of Angiviller's private mansion situated at the end of the street. Taken from a wider angle 17 years later, Victor-Jean Nicolle's work depicting the Colonnade of the Louvre makes it possible to grasp the height and scale of the terrace (ill. 3). Built facing the Louvre in 1745 for Charles Claude Flahaut de La Billarderie (1730-1809), Count of Angiviller (1754), the mansion which acted as an annex to the house of the *Pères de l'Oratoire* (Fathers of the Oratory), then had artists' studios during the First Empire before becoming the city office of the former 4th arrondissement.

Our work shows the painter's skill in rendering the

minutest architectural details and confirms his gift as a draughtsman, as well as his ability in rendering carefully studied light so that it emphasizes and flatters the architecture of the Palace of the Louvre.

Demachy's oeuvre forms a veritable documentary tool for historians. Depictions of the clearance of the Louvre Colonnade (between 1758 and 1793) and views of the palace make up most of his oeuvre. In addition to architectural vision, the painter illustrated daily life at the end of the century and the opposition which existed between the city and the court exiled to Versailles. In Paris, the streets swarmed with philosophers, encyclopaedists, literary men, artists, public figures, artisans and merchants of all kinds. Geographically the Louvre constitutes the heart of the city, a place of transactions and the effervescence of life independent of the distant and strict etiquette of Versailles.

M.O.

¹ Félix Lazare, Louis Lazare, *Dictionnaire administratif et historique des rues de Paris et de ses monuments*, (excerpts of the Letters patent), Félix Lazare, Paris, 1844, p. 12-13.





Henri-François RIESENER

(Paris, 1767 – 1828)

9 | *Bust Portrait of a Man Wearing a Dark Purplish Velvet Jacket and a High White Collar*

1809

Oil on canvas

Signed and dated, lower right: *Riesener 1809*

65.4 x 53.8 cm. (25 ¾ x 21 ⅓ in.)

Beautiful late 18th c. grooved wood gilt frame with pearl and leaf-and-dart decor.

Provenance:

- France, Private Collection.

Bibliography:

- *Une dynastie d'artistes : Les Trois Riesener*, exh. cat. Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1954.

Caught between two centuries, Henri-François Riesener was born in 1767 into an artistic milieu and received his first initiation into his father's art, Jean-Henri Riesener, Louis XV's and then Louis XVI's famous cabinet-maker. The young artist next studied under Antoine Vestier (1740-1824) who re-oriented his career towards portraiture. The annals of the Academy's schools mention that for a while, he was a student of François-André Vincent (1746-1816) and then of Jacques-Louis David (1748-1824), before his career was brutally interrupted by military service and then the Revolution. Riesener participated thus in the Salon for the first time in 1793 and the second time in 1799, before exhibiting regularly until 1814, when he received the grand gold medal with Napoleon's effigy. The Salon brochures list a large production of male and female portraits whose meager descriptions do not make it possible to identify them nor to determine their exact dates.

The Bourbons' return to power slowed the number of commissions for the artist who chose to leave for Russia from 1816 to 1823. Passing through Warsaw, he met the Grand Duke Constantin who subsequently presented him to the Empress and to Emperor Alexander. During these seven years, Riesener encountered real success. He would be charged with painting, among others, the Russian aristocracy and high trade celebrities.

As he was a terrific portraitist, his works were praised in his lifetime producing many commissions, to the point that sometimes he produced numerous replicas.



Ill. 1

Henri-François Riesener

Portrait of Jean-Henri Riesener (1734 - 1806), the Artist's Father

Signed and dated, lower left: *Riesener 1800*

Oil on canvas

Sotheby's, New York, January 29th, 2016.

Although the identity of our sitter remains uncertain, our picture, dated 1809, is a beautiful example of French commissions under the Empire which he received before leaving for Russia. In the simple elegance of his



presentation, the artist depicts the bust portrait of a man turned slightly three-quarters to the side. Eliminating superfluous details, Riesener depicts his sitter with elegant simplicity: he wears a purplish velvet suit with large lapels and a brilliant white high elegantly tied collar typical of Empire fashions.

At this time, collars and cravats required several meters of extremely expensive cotton. Sometimes they were so wide that they came all the way up to the ears, as is shown in our portrait and one required assistance in order to tie them appropriately.

The silvery disheveled hair is skillfully organized. The sitter's hair is in the latest fashion which was called "à la Titus" and put an end to Old Regime wigs by establishing an affiliation with the Republican principles of Rome and ancient Greece.

Like his eminent contemporary Jacques-Louis David, Riesener presents most of his sitters against a neutral copper-toned ground which is often brushed in. Other portraits by the artist against such a ground include one of his father (*ill. 1*) which was inspired by David's work. This ground lets the light play from the face to the textures, and concentrates attention on facial expression. In our painting, the state of mind thus captured on the face reveals the benevolence of this man posing serenely before the painter on whom he fixes his blue eyes void of any wariness. The virtuosity of the artist's brushwork participates in rendering the picture moving and almost transcends the picture. The direct and almost familiar aspect of our portrait could, for that matter, lead one to think that the two men knew each other well.

After his return from Russia, Henri-François Riesener was reunited with his wife and son, and met with more success. This epic enabled him to establish himself as an independent painter whose portraits delighted the eyes of his most eminent contemporaries. He was an excellent colorist recognized by his elders for the verity emanating from his portraits which allowed him to live "above all need."¹

This work will be included in a catalogue raisonné being prepared on the artist by Mr. Alexis Bordes and Mr. Philippe Nusbaumer.

M.O.

¹ Letter from Henri-François Riesener to his wife, written when the artist was still in Moscow. (*Une dynastie d'artistes: Les Trois Riesener*, exh. cat., Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1954)



Constance-Marie CHARPENTIER

(Paris, 1767 - 1849)

10 | *Children Caring for their Mother*

1804

Oil on its original canvas

Signed lower left : *C. M. Bondu Charpentier*

96 x 116.5 cm. (3 ft. 1⁵/₁₆ in. x 3 ft. 9 ⁷/₈ in.)

Provenance:

- Artist's Collection.
- Post-mortem inventory of François-Victor Charpentier on May 16th, 1810 “*It two pictures, specifically one of a blind father and the other of a convalescent mother in their gilt frames, appraised and estimated at one hundred forty-four francs.*”
- Family Collection of the heirs, southern France.
- France, Private Collection.

Exhibition:

- 1804, Paris Salon, n° 94, “*Convalescent Mother Cared for by her Children.*”

Bibliography:

- Yaelle Arasa, *Davidiennes, Les femmes peintres de l'atelier de Jacques-Louis David (1768-1825)*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2019.
- Margaret Ann Oppenheimer, *Women artists in Paris, 1791-1814*, New York University ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1996.

Citizeness Charpentier or *Madame Charpentier*, as she was called in the official Parisian Salon booklet, was in fact, the painter Constance-Marie Charpentier, *née* Bondelu. At the age of 17, she entered Jacques-Louis David's studio (Paris, 1748 – Brussels, 1825) and developed her artistic competence before devoting herself entirely to a type of genre painting with moral connotations based on Denis Diderot's writings which had been inspired by the work of Jean-Baptiste Greuze (Tournus, 1725-Paris, 1805) in the second half of the 18th century. She finished her training under François Gérard (Rome, 1770 – Paris, 1837) and Pierre-Alexandre Wille (Paris, 1748 – 1821), a genre painter who fully indulged his penchant for intimate family scenes. As a member outside of the Academy, Constance-Marie Charpentier was only allowed to exhibit in the Salon starting in 1791. There she met with complete success from 1795 until 1819.

Her work was often compared to that of Marguerite Gérard (Grasse, 1761 – Paris, 1837) for the similarity of their subjects: maternal tenderness figures prominently in their oeuvre (*ill. 1*). Thus, at the Salons of 1806 and 1812, Charpentier presented respectively *Portrait of Mme. F*** holding her Daughter on her Lap* (n° 95) and *Mother Receiving Her Daughter's Secrets* (N° 183) which thus glorified the mother-child relationship, whereas the father, if depicted, only played a secondary role.

In a fairly comfortable interior, a sweet image of daily life appears. In the center of the composition, an old woman, gazing upward as if imploring the heavens to come to her aid, seems to have just risen from her bed in order to get to an armchair placed near a table where chocolate is served. Apparently the mother of four children, she is supported by the two older ones: on one side, she leans on her son's shoulder, and on the other, on the arm of her daughter who also carries one of her pillows. The youngest daughter pulls the chair closer, while the second







Ill. 1
 Marguerite GÉRARD (Grasse, 1761 – Paris, 1837)
First Steps ou The Nursing Mother
 Between 1803 and 1804
 Oil on wood
 63 x 53.5 cm. (2 ft. 13/16 in. x 1 ft. 9 1/16 in.)
 Grasse, Fragonard Villa Museum, Inv. 2010.0.371



Ill. 2
 Constance-Marie CHARPENTIER
Portrait of Mademoiselle Brongniart drawn after Gérard
 by Mme Charpentier
 Fusain and lead point
 50 x 45 cm. (19 1/16 x 17 1/16 in.)
 Private Collection

youngest, standing on the right side of the composition, very carefully brings a cup of hot chocolate.

At the heart of the sensitivity expressed in Constance-Marie Charpentier's oeuvre, our picture illustrates both maternal love as the French family ideal model, and evokes the artist's actual life as a mother who had prematurely lost her first daughter Constance-Julie at the age of nine, a year before this picture was realized.

In this work, which has an unusual format for the artist, the harmonious composition presents a multitude of details blended into a meticulously thought-out entity. The powerful contrast between the dark background demarcating the room, and the light in the foreground gives a warm theatrical dimension to the scene. In addition to establishing rigorous Neoclassic constructions, the artist develops a delicate charming style learned from her apprenticeship under David, as

well as a purity of line acquired from close observation under François Gérard. Indeed, at the beginning, Charpentier practiced drawing by copying some of her masters' works, such as Gérard's *Portrait of Mademoiselle Brongniart* (ill. 2). As for the gentle faces handled with a soft palette heightened by light pink brushstrokes, they are not foreign to Wille's works.

Constance-Marie Charpentier's corpus remains complex. Although bearing the distinctive imprint of her own dreamy gracefulness, her oeuvre could be confused with that of her contemporaries, including Marie-Denise Villiers, on account of her excellent technique which she continued perfecting throughout her career. Such is the case for the portrait of *Charlotte of Val d'Oignes* exhibited in the 1801 Salon (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art) whose attribution was recently returned to her.

M.O.

Robert LEFEVRE

(Bayeux, 1755 – Paris, 1830)

- 11 | *Portrait assumed to be of Aglaé-Louise Ney (1782-1854), née Auguié, wife of Field Marshal Michel Ney, Duchess of Elchingen and Princess of [the] Moskva*

1810

Oil on its original canvas

Signed and dated lower right: *Robert Lefèvre ft 1810*

73.2 x 59.4 cm. (28 ¹³/₁₆ x 23 ³/₈ in.)

Empire period gilt wood frame decorated with palmettes

Provenance:

- Monnier Family, by inheritance;
- France, Private Collection.

Bibliography:

- Gaston Lavalley, *Le Peintre Robert Lefèvre, sa vie et son œuvre*, Louis Jouan, Caen, 1914.
- *Mémoires de la Reine Hortense*, [Hortense (Queen of Holland)]; published by Prince Napoleon; with notes by Jean Hanoteau, Paris: Plon, 1927, Vol. I.

Robert Lefèvre's name enjoys an international reputation today because the artist was lauded in his lifetime by the critics. We learn from a few rare biographical notices that the young artist from Bayeux, who was originally destined for a judicial career, ended up turning to the arts and began as an autodidact between Bayeux and Caen. At the age of 18, the artist traveled to Paris and upon returning to Calvados, developed a local reputation for his painting. In 1784, he went to Paris where he entered one of the most considerable studios of the time, that of Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1754-1829), who was considered the leading rival of Jacques-Louis David (1754-1829) known for his history compositions and genre pictures. Lefèvre's precocious talent rapidly recognized by his peers allowed him to build a solid reputation by exhibiting in the Salons from 1791 until 1827. The dawn of the 19th century marked the apogee of his career and from then on, his clientele extended beyond the French borders. It mainly consisted of wealthy elegant member of the First Empire whom he followed assiduously and for whom he became, thanks to the Dominique Vivant Denon's support (1747-1826), the official iconographer of its power by multiplying the images of the Emperor. His success continued until the Restoration when he was appointed First Painter to Louis XVIII.



Ill. 1
Pierre Louis Bouvier (1766 - 1836)
The Wife of Field Marshal Ney, Duchess of Elchingen
1808
Watercolor and gouache highlights on ivory
5.2 x 4 cm. (2 ¹/₁₆ x 1 ⁹/₁₆ in.)
Private Collection.





Ill. 2
 François-Joseph Kinson
Portrait of Adèle Auguié, Sister of Aglaé Auguié
 c. 1810
 Private Collection.



Ill. 3
 François-Joseph Kinson
Portrait of Aglaé Auguié in the Park of Malmaison
 1800-1801
 Private Collection.

The half-length portrait of a woman is presented against a brushed copper-green background. The sitter is depicted serenely seated on what appears to be a gilt wooden armchair with Empire red velvet upholstery and resting her hands delicately on a cushion of the same hue with gilt braid. She wears a high-waist short-sleeved low-cut V-neck blue dress edged with silver thread embroidery and belted with a sash. In addition to the magnificent ivory-colored embroidered shawl which has slipped off her right shoulder, her hair is held by an elegant little comb whose gold mount is decorated with pearls accompanied by a matching set of ear pendants, symbols of a comfortable social condition. Our sitter's hairstyle follows the fashion launched by the Beauharnais in which hair is pulled back into a bun from which escape thick curls falling over the forehead.

Here Lefèvre seems to have depicted Aglaé Auguié, of whom we know a miniature portrait in gouache dated 1808 by the Swiss artist Pierre Bouvier (*ill. 1*). Depicted two years before our painting, the latter is characterized by the same sensitivity transcribed through the finesse of her features. Her almond-shaped eyes plunging into

the painter's communicate tenderness, timidity and even more, a certain candor evoked by her delicate pinched mouth and cheeks heightened with rouge that Bouvier made a point of rendering in his miniature.

After the unexpected death of his wife, ex-Lady of the Chamber to Queen Marie-Antoinette, Pierre-César Auguié and his three daughters settled into the Château de Grignon. The property was purchased with a fortune accumulated under the *Ancien Régime*: Auguié had been general bailiff of the kingdom's provisions before being appointed general finance (tax) collector for the Duchy of Bar and Lorraine. His sister-in-law, Madame Campan, who had been First Lady of the Queen's Chamber, devoted herself to the education of her nieces Antoinette-Louise (1780-1833), Adelaide-Henriette, called Adele, (1772-1810) (*ill. 2*), and Aglaé, called Eglé, the youngest (1782-1854) (*ill. 3*). She placed them in the National Institution of Saint-Germain which she founded in 1794, as a boarding school aiming to educate girls from the upper bourgeoisie. There the three young women met Pauline and Caroline Bonaparte, as well as Hortense de Beauharnais.



Ill. 4
 Adèle Auguié (1772-1810)
Aglaé Auguié and Hortense de Beauharnais, drawing, c. 1802
 46.5 x 59.5 cm. (18 ³/₁₆ x 23 ⁷/₁₆ in.)
 Rueil-Malmaison, National Museum of the Malmaison et de Bois-Préau
 Chateaux (inv. M.M.96.25.1).

“My close connection with Madame Campan’s nieces made the separation from my family less painful and sometimes I went to Grignon, Mr. Auguié’s beautiful property.”¹

Aglaé and Hortense developed a deep flawless friendship which encouraged Josephine, First Lady of the Consulate, to have her daughter and daughter’s friend marry the same year. In 1802, Hortense married Louis Bonaparte and Aglaé, the “brave of the brave” military (officers), Michel Ney who proudly became one of the first to be promoted Marshal of the Empire two years later.

“Eglé, Adèle’s second sister, was full of kindness, sensitivity and charm. We had her married to General Ney and I remained constantly in touch with her.”²

The National Museum of the Malmaison and Bois-Préau Chateaux conserve a drawing executed by Adele Aguié which depicts Aglaé and her friend Hortense seized by profound melancholy in the year of their weddings (*ill. 4*). Through her union, Aglaé became wife of Field Marshal Ney, and thus Duchess of Elchingen and

Princess of the Moskva, and was present at Napoleon’s coronation as one of the ladies in the Empress’ court.

“I will teach you to draw, but not to paint; because your coloring is that of Nature, of whom you appear to be the student.”³

With these words, Jean-Baptiste Regnault had naturally realized that Lefèvre, who was only one year younger than he was, already knew the art of painting. Gaston Lavalley’s work published in 1914 mentioned that before entering Regnault’s studio in 1784, Robert Lefèvre had taught himself painting by studying his sitters sketched from life and then corrected on the spot.

Whether depicting citizens close to the seat of power, the artist himself, or simple individuals looking for social recognition, Lefèvre rendered each detail of his sitters with great care. In our portrait, his virtuosity is expressed through scrupulous minute brushstrokes ranging from the handling of finely drawn hair to the silver embroidery on the dress or the light reflections on the white pearls of the ear rings.

A tireless worker, artist, and excellent businessman who enjoyed international fame, Robert Lefèvre was a



Ill. Annex
 Sélina DUFOR (19th c.)
Wife of Marshal Ney of Elchingen, Princess of the Moskva
 c. 1830-35
 Gouache and watercolor on ivory
 9.5 x 8 cm. (3 ¾ x 3 ⅛ in.)
 Private Collection.

portraitist of the elegant society and known from the end of the monarchy to the Restoration, and including the Empire which offered him all the honors for which a painter could hope. In systematically seeking to perfect himself, the artist was not content simply with the praise he received from the public which classed him among the best painters of his time, but also sought honorific distinctions by signing up for the list of candidates to the *Philotechnical Society* in order to frequent scholars, scientists, literary figures and politicians.

“You have entrusted me, citizen colleagues, to give you a report on Citizen Robert Lefèvre, painter, inscribed on the list of candidates who seek the honor of occupying a place among you one day. If talents are recommendable, if all the qualities of character and heart give these rights, then Citizen Robert Lefèvre incontestably possesses them. Here is the list of his works into which I will not enter into detail, because in general, they are known to you.”²⁴

M.O.

¹ *Mémoires de la Reine Hortense*, [Hortense (Queen of Holland)]; published by Prince Napoleon; with notes by Jean Hanoteau, Paris: Plon, 1927, Vol. I, p. 49.

² *Ibid.* Vol. I, p. 122

³ Reportedly Jean-Baptiste Regnault’s reaction upon seeing Robert Lefèvre’s first studies. Gaston Lavalley, *Le Peintre Robert Lefèvre, sa vie et son œuvre*, Louis Jouan, Caen, 1914, pp. 17-18.

⁴ Joseph Lavallée in his report to the *Société philotechnique*, 2 *Thermidor, An IX* (July 21st, 1801).



Henri-François RIESENER

(Paris, 1767 – 1828)

12 | *Portrait assumed to be of the Marquise of Chamillard Tuning her Harp*

c. 1815

Oil on its original canvas

81 x 32 cm. (31 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.)

Provenance:

- Former collection of the Loschi Zileri dal Verme Palace, Vicence (sale Oct. 20th, 2021, lot 81);
- France, Private Collection.

Bibliography:

- *Une dynastie d'artistes: Les Trois Riesener*, exh. cat. Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1954.

Our picture is a beautiful example of the French commissions which Henri-François Riesener received during the Empire period before his departure for Russia.

With elegant simplicity, the artist reveals the profile of a young woman seen half-length and tuning her harp against a plain-colored background. She wears a white organdy dress in which a cashmere shawl is used as a belt and short sleeves are held by a coral-colored bow which echoes her jewelry. A fine comb holds her hair in place with a gold mount decorated with coral pearls matching her delicate ear pendants. Her coiffure follows styles launched by the Beauharnais in which the hair was caught in a bun while thick curls fell across the forehead. The whole display evokes comfortable social conditions.

Although our sitter's identity remains uncertain, her features can be compared to those of the Marquise of Chamillard whose life and work still remain unknown. A portrait of the probable marquise was painted by the Swiss painter Firmin Massot during the same period (*ill. 1*).

Instrumental music really flourished during the 18th century. Under Louis XIV's reign, the Royal Academy of Music provided teaching of music in the kingdom. The late 18th century saw the appearance of the National Conservatory of Music created with the law of 15 Thermidor, year III (August 3rd, 1795), that combined the former Royal School of Singing and the National Institute of Music under the same name. Long associated with vocal music, the 18th century brought the arrival of



Ill. 1
Firmin Massot (1766-1849)
Portrait assumed to be of the Marquise de Chamillard
1810
Oil on canvas
87 x 69 cm. (34 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 27 $\frac{3}{16}$ in.)
Private Collection.

women figures in instrumental music. Popularized by Queen Marie-Antoinette who gave her first concert at the court in 1770, the harp, an instrument known since Antiquity, became a veritable element of fashion in Paris, and many women from the upper bourgeoisie followed this path.







Ill. 2
Henri-François RIESENER
Portrait of Joséphine Frédeux (Ulyana Miklailova Alexandrova) at the Harp
Oil on canvas
128 x 94 cm. (50 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 37 cm.)
Private Collection.

It is an instrument which has a lot of width, whose sound is harmonious, and the shape is pleasant. Our Ladies with whom the Harp appears to agree, no doubt will learn with pleasure that Lady Gramer, living in Paris, rue Tiquetonne, at the Hôtel de la Providence, successfully teaches how to play this instrument, as much by the book as by memory, and that little by little she is forming good women students.¹

Until the mid-19th century, the harp counted among the most expensive musical instruments. It can be found in portraits of young ladies seeking social recognition. The few rare portraits of women figures tuning their instrument makes it possible to see that it was more than an imaginary attribute as learning music contributed to their social position. Our sitter is thus depicted turning the instrument's keys, which were invented in the 17th century and made it possible to change the tension of certain strings and regulate the highness of the notes produced.

During the Empire, Empress Josephine regularly played the harp and thus perpetuated the fashion. One of the Empress' harps, exquisitely crafted by Cousineau (Father and Son Lutemakers) is conserved today at Rueil-Malmaison, in the châteaux of Malmaison and Bois-Préau (inv. M.M..40.47.127).



Ill. 3
Henri-François RIESENER
Portrait of a Harpist and a Singer
130.5 x 98 cm. (51 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 38 $\frac{1}{16}$ in.)
Private Collection.

In our composition, the plain coppery, lightly brushed background shows David's influence and allows the light to play over face and textures, while concentrating attention on the sitter's facial expression.

Rieseener enjoyed painting these musicians (*ill. 2*). A double portrait depicting a singer and a harpist (*ill. 3*) conserved in a private collection forms excellent evidence of the painter's skill in rendering states of mind. Here the artist lets the tenderness of the sitter's gaze and benevolence be seen as if she is interrupted in her task.

Praised for his sense of psychology and facility in executing his works, Henri-François Rieseener is a portraitist who was known in his time and who knew how to lift himself to the ranks of his most eminent contemporaries to the point that certain of his works were confused for theirs.

This work will be included in a catalogue raisonné on the artist being prepared by Mr. Alexis Bordes and Mr. Philippe Nusbaumer.

M.O.

¹ *L'avant coureur: feuille hebdomadaire*, Paris, M. Lambert, March 30th, 1767, p. 195.

Louis HERSENT

(Paris, 1777 – 1860)

13 | *Portrait assumed to be of Anne Françoise Hippolyte Boutet, called Mademoiselle Mars (1779-1847), Sociétaire of the Comédie-Française*

c. 1820

Oil on canvas and its original stretcher

Old sale label on the verso of the stretcher: GERARD (Attributed to the Baron) under the number 96

61 x 50 cm. (24 x 19 1/16 in.)

Provenance:

- Probably in Sale, Dec. 1st, 1890, *Tableaux anciens, nombreux portraits des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècle et tableaux modernes... 2^e Vente*, [Old Pictures, Many 17th and 18th century portraits and modern pictures...2nd Sale], Mazaroz-Ribalier collection, under number 79, “GERARD (*in the manner of Baron F.*) *Portrait assumed to be of Mlle Mars.*”
- France, Private Collection.

Bibliography:

- Elisa Aclocque, *Souvenirs anecdotiques sur Mademoiselle Mars*, Librairie de Chaumerot, Paris, 1847.
- Anne-Marie de Brem, *Louis Hersent: peintre d'histoire et portraitiste*, exh. cat., Paris: Paris-musées, Museum of Romantic Life, Sept. 29th, 1993 – Jan. 9th, 1994.
- Patrick Shawcable, “Louis Hersent,” *La Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Jan. 1999, pp. 20-21.

“M. Hersent was not just a great painter, He was also very intelligent and witty, had taste and good judgment, and above all, was a good man.”¹

Unjustly overlooked by history for more than half a century, Louis Hersent was nonetheless a student of the most famous painters of his time, including Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) and Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1754-1829), and enjoyed great fame under the Restoration and the July Monarchy.

The young artist began his career as a history painter inspired by the greatest artists, including Baron Gerard (1770-1837). Under this influence, Hersent realized many formal portraits in a similar vein, such as the *Portrait of the Field Marshal of Massena* (Nice, Villa Massena, inv. MAH 3255), a fact which probably led to many mistaken attributions of which our portrait is a convincing example. In fact, an old sale label glued to our work's stretcher mentions an attribution to Baron Gerard.

“Collectors worthy of the name for a moment thought they recognized M. Gerard's touch. Certainly nothing [could be] more flattering for Mr. Hersent, but I dare believe as well that Mr. Gerard would not complain about the mistake.”²



Ill. 1

Aimée Perlet (c. 1798-1854)

Mademoiselle Mars, portrait copied on porcelain after the painting by Gerard

Exhibited at the Salon of 1824, Paris, under no.1325

19.5 x 15.5 cm. (7 1/16 x 6 1/8 in.)

Private Collection.



After a stay in Rome during which he only retained the handling of light, Hersent returned to France and participated in the weakening of academic authority which made it possible for him to convert to Romantic painting, a trend guided by exoticism which the artist integrated willingly into his works. Already well-known for his presence at the Salon since 1802, it was following his outright success at the Salon of 1824 that he chose to devote himself almost exclusively to the art of portraiture, mainly of women whose grace was largely enhanced in his hands.

Our picture presents one of these portraits which were often of illustrious women, wives and coveted young women and very much in demand. By depicting these high society profiles, the artist found a carefully selected clientele who took advantage of his gifts for tracing a souvenir of their young beauty and multiplying commissions. Most of his sitters pose inside. In our work, the young woman seems to be posing outside surrounded by stormy woods and sky in contrast with her dazzling powdered ivory complexion. In her right hand, she grips a small notebook tightly and seems slip a finger inside to hold a page.

Our sitter's facial features can be compared to those of Anne Françoise Hippolyte Boutet, called Mademoiselle Mars (1779-1847), a *sociétaire* – that is, actress and member - of the Comédie Française. Comparison with a work after Baron Gerard is particularly striking (*ill. 1*).

“This inimitable actress who made the glory and the fortune of the Comédie Française for so many years; this woman for whom Marivaux and Molière must have found a last sigh at the bottom of their cold dark abodes.”³

The little notebook which she holds could well be a personal compilation of notes concerning her career. According to her contemporaries, during the 1820s, Mademoiselle Mars was a triumphant actress at the Comédie Française whose success gave her absolute authority over her peers. In particular, she participated in bringing Molière and Marivaux back into fashion. She played the role of the Duchess of Guise in Alexander Dumas' *Henri III and his Court* (1829), Doña Sol in Victor Hugo's *Hernani* (1830), and Desdemona in Alfred de Vigny's *The Moor of Venice* (1834).



Ill. 2
 Louis Hersent
Portrait of Sophie Gay (1776-1852), née Nichalut de la Valette,
 1824
 Oil on canvas
 130.5 x 97 cm. (4 ft. 3 3/16 x 3 ft. 2 3/16 in.)
 Versailles, National Museum of the Châteaux of Versailles
 and Trianon (inv. MV 6034).

“Why were you called Mars, then? ‘Ah! Ah! The little chatterbox (that was the name she called me when the barometer returned to beautiful weather); I will tell you. The name of Mars came from my mother. My mother lived in Carcassonne, came from a good family and was beautiful. Letting herself get carried away, she entered the theater to upset her family who pursued the one who abducted her there, the name Mars was given to him rather than to her. -- This name got lost in wings of the stage and here is when it was passed on to me as a sort of inheritance. A reader of cards whom I consulted one evening in the company of Talma foretold immense success and a great number of conquests for me; the prediction spread around and from then on Mars became my nickname. – My sister, who also was in the theater at the time, wanted to share the glory, and until her death, the public told us apart by Mars the Elder and Mars the Younger. That is the real truth.”⁴

Attired in the latest fashion, she wears a vaporous dress in white muslin which reveals her shoulders, while fine lace covers her bust, and transparent gauze on the sleeves brings out the whiteness of her skin. Her hairdo is in keeping with the worthy silhouettes of the Empire Period. The high bun wrapped in a gold band from which thick curls escape to be skillfully arranged around her face recalls the one worn by Hortense de Beauharnais in the famous portrait painted by Anne-Louis Girodet de Roucy-Trioson (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-A-4943).

An elegant red cashmere shawl embroidered with floral motifs falls from her shoulders and is held around her bust by her right arm. An element which was indispensable for feminine attire and collected by Empress Josephine, the cashmere shawls appear in most portraits of women in the first half of the 19th century. Very expensive and a symbol of belonging, they instantly communicate high social status (*ill. 2*).

With a supple and enveloping brushstroke, Hersent endows his sitter with a gentle delicate gaze, and does justice to the striking harmony of her complexion which combine gentleness and gracious curves. Although it is difficult to determine the sitter’s age, a certain candor emanates from this evasive and almost mischievous gaze as if she were interrupted in her thoughts. The artist takes care to emphasize the fineness of her facial features in highlighting the pink cheeks and mouth.



Ill. 3
 Louis Hersent
Portrait of Delphine Gay (1804-1855)
 Oil on canvas
 92 x 72 cm. (3 ft. ¼ in. x 2 ft. 4 ⅜ in.)
 Versailles, National Museum of the Châteaux of Versailles and
 Trianon (inv. MV 6503).

Praised for the accuracy and precision of his brush, Hersent demonstrated rigor in drawing which was then included in the painting. This is particularly apparent in the handling of the hair which almost becomes the artist's signature in which his virtuosity is detected. As in the portrait of the writer *Delphine Gay*, the unctuous lines traced by the brush make it possible to underline the artist's ingeniousness in capturing light and transcribing its brilliant effects on the hair.

Hersent played with knowledge of radiance and gentleness which he expressed poetically in each of his portraits. Using his gifts as a colorist combined with his mastery of light, he brought his works to life by systematically creating a striking contrast between the background and the sitter. A famous Romantic portraitist, Hersent met with increasing success by playing with the harmony of fabrics, on the one hand, and transparency effects on the other, as here where organza magnifies the whole composition, and expresses passion and melancholy through blended brushstrokes. The gentle sensual atmosphere of our work leads one to think it was a private commission realized at the height of Hersent's career, when the artist raised the art of portraiture to its highest level manifesting his sense of psychology as much as his technical mastery.

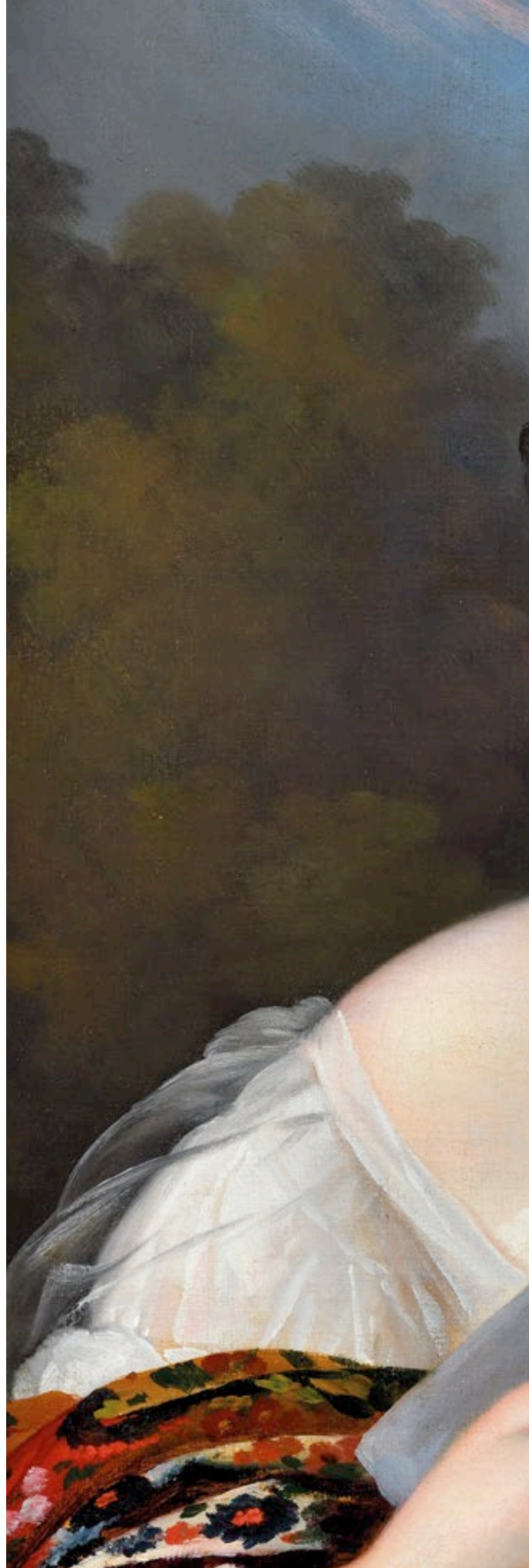
M.O.

¹ Extract from the biography of Louis Hersent by A. de Saint Vincent, *Les Beaux-Arts*, Oct.15th, 1860, p. 397.

² *Journal de Paris*, April 28th, 1822. Saint-Vincent.

³ Elisa Aclocque, *Souvenirs anecdotiques sur Mademoiselle Mars*, Librairie de Chaumerot, Paris, 1847, p. NP.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.





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