

Ennemond-Alexandre Petitot (1727 - 1801)

Design for a Stage Curtain: The Interior of an Elaborate Temple Dedicated to Illustrious Men

Pen and grey ink and grey wash, with framing lines in black ink.
Inscribed Petitot and Tempio della Gloria eretto alli Uomini Illustri, per servire di Sipario a Pavia on the verso.
370 x 400 mm. (14 1/2 x 15 3/4 in.)

ACQUIRED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The appearance of the temple in this drawing is derived from an etching by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) of a temple dedicated to Vesta, included as part of his Prima Parte di Architetture, e Prospettive inventate, published in Rome in 1743. Although Piranesi's etching is vertical in orientation and differs in both staffage and several significant architectural details from the present sheet, the close relationship between the two is readily evident. Petitot is likely to have made the present drawing while a pupil at the Académie Royale d'Architecture in Paris, or as a pensionnaire at the Académie de France in Rome.

Among stylistically comparable works by Petitot dating from his Roman period is his elaborate design for a temporary structure or macchina for the Roman firework festival of the Chinea in 1749, engraved several years later by Pierre Patte, as well as a Project for a Triumphal Bridge in Rome of c.1747, recorded in an engraving by the artist himself.

The pencil inscription on the verso states that the present sheet is a design for a stage curtain for a theatre in the Lombard town of Pavia.

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, London, Phillips, 6 July 1994, lot 131 (as Circle of Nicolas Moretty)
Ralph Holland, Newcastle
Thence by descent until 2013.

Artist description:

An architect as well as a designer of ephemeral decorations, Ennemond-Alexandre Petitot studied in Lyon with the architect Jacques-Germain Soufflot and later at the Académie Royale d'Architecture in Paris, where he won the Premier Grand Prix for architecture in 1745. He was at the Académie de France in Rome between 1746 and 1750, and in 1753 was appointed court architect to the Duke of Parma. He remained at the Ducal court in Parma, which was dominated by French influences, for the remainder of his career. Petitot published two important and influential series of prints; a compendium of Vases in 1764 and a series of satirical subjects entitled La Mascarade à la Grecque, which appeared in Parma in 1771. Several architectural drawings by Petitot are today in the collection of the Archivio dello Stato in Parma.