

Charles-Nicolas Cochin (Paris 1715 - Paris 1790)

Two Angels Flanking the Coat of Arms of France

Black chalk on vellum.
Signed or inscribed cochin fils inv. at the lower left.
97 x 123 mm. (3 7/8 x 4 7/8 in.)

This small drawing on vellum is likely to have been a design for a frontispiece, vignette, title page or some other part of a book illustration. A number of similar drawings of the royal coats of arms are recorded in Charles-Antoine Jombert's 1770 catalogue of Cochin's work, such as two examples listed under the date 1739: 'Petit fleuron pour le titre du livre, les armes du Roi sur un globe, soutenu par deux Anges, & environné de nuages.' or 'Le même Fleuron des Arms du Roi, gravé plus en grand par Cochin, pour in-8o: les figures y sont retournées de droite à gauche.'

In the present sheet, Cochin may have been inspired by the very similar composition of his father's small design for a vignette of c.1720-1740, today in the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor.

Artist description:

The son of an engraver of the same name, Charles-Nicolas Cochin fils followed in his father's footsteps as a printmaker. From 1735 onwards he was employed at the Menus-Plaisirs du Roi, producing drawings and engravings of all the major events, festivals and ceremonies of the Royal court. He is best known today, however, for his portrait drawings of some of the leading men and women of 18th century France, and for his parallel career as a book illustrator. Indeed, by the end of his life Cochin had contributed illustrations and vignettes to more than two hundred books, many of these commissions achieved through the intervention of the bookseller and publisher Charles-Antoine Jombert. His illustrations were, as one modern scholar has noted, 'marked not only by the mastery of outline and firmness of composition which never deserted him, but also by acute observation and unpretentious humor. They remain fresh and attractive today.'2 Cochin's position as the leading engraver in France for much of the 18th century was further strengthened by the lifelong friendship and protection of the Marquis de Marigny, Directeur des Bâtiments du Roi from 1751 onwards. With the support of Marigny, Cochin rose to a position of considerable power and influence at the Bâtiments du Roi, of which he was given charge of the administration. He also published a number of theoretical writings on art, notably the Lettres à un jeune artiste peintre, which appeared in c.1774.