

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Gilles-Paul CAUVET (Aix-en-Provence 1731 1731 - Paris 1788)

Design for a Decorative Panel with a Cherub Seated on a Globe

Red chalk, with framing lines in red chalk.

Laid down.

471 x 198 mm. (18 1/2 x 7 3/4 in.)

The present sheet is a study for a print by Elise-Caroline Liottier published in Cauvet's 'Receuil d'ornemens à l'usage des jeunes artistes qui se destinent à la décoration des bâtimens', published in Paris in 1777 with a dedication to 'Monsieur', the brother of King Louis XVI. This was part of a large group of over twenty drawings by Cauvet, most of which were studies for the 'Receuil d'ornemens', formerly in the collection of Martine-Marie-Pol de Béhague, the Comtesse de Béarn (1869-1939), and dispersed at auction in Paris in 1995.

A related red chalk drawing of an ornamental panel by Cauvet, depicting Cupid Gardeners (Les amours

jardiniers) and also engraved for the *Recueil d'ornemens*, shared the same provenance as the present sheet and is now in Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. Likewise from the Béhague collection are two similar drawings by Cauvet for boiseries panels – one of Venus and Cupid and the other of A Nymph with a Vase of Flowers on her Head– which appeared at auction in 1995 and 2007 and are today in a private American collection.

Among other comparable drawings by Cauvet is a similar study for a vertical panel, drawn in red and black chalk, in the collection of the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin, and another arabesque design for a carved boiserie panel, in red chalk, in the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York.

Literature:

Gilles Cauvet, *Recueil d'ornemens à l'usage des jeunes artistes qui se destinent à la décoration des bâtiments*, Paris, 1776, p.7; Horace Wood Brock, Martin P. Levy and Clifford S. Ackley, *Splendor and Elegance: European Decorative Arts and Drawings from the Horace Wood Brock Collection*, exhibition catalogue, Boston, 2009, p.159, no.154, illustrated p.145.

Artist description:

The sculptor, architect, engraver and ornamental designer Gilles-Paul Cauvet was admitted to the Académie de Saint Luc in 1762, and four years later was named Director of the institution. In 1775 he was appointed official sculptor to 'Monsieur', the Comte de Provence and brother of Louis XVI. Cauvet was particularly known and regarded for his interior decorations, as well as for his designs for boiseries, furniture, clocks and gilt bronze ornaments for such clients as the Queen, Marie-Antoinette. Appointed sculpteur des bâtiments du roi, Cauvet worked at the Palais-Royal, the Luxembourg Palace and the Opéra at Versailles. He often collaborated with the architects Alexandre-Théodore Brogniart and Etienne-Louis Boullée, decorating the interiors of many private hôtels particuliers in Paris, notably the hôtels de Noailles, Kinski, de Mazarin, de Mailly-Nesle and du Nivernais.

In the 1780s Cauvet worked on the design of several public buildings in his hometown of Aix-en-Provence and in nearby Marseille. At a time, in the third quarter of the 18th century, when sculpture and relief work in wood or stucco began to dominate the field of interior decoration, where previously painted decorative schemes had prevailed, Cauvet's distinctive style, with its use of motifs such as acanthus leaves, scrolls and so forth, was characterized by a particular lightness and elegance. In March 1789, the year after Cauvet's death, much of the contents of his atelier were dispersed at auction, although some works remained in the family and passed to his granddaughter, Henriette Hélix Cauvet, Mme. Ernest Lefevre, and were in turn sold at auction in Paris in 1883.

Cauvet's drawings are quite rare, although important groups of ornamental drawings by the artist are in the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin, the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg and the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. The collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York includes an album of some fifty designs by the artist for fountains, arabesques, furniture and silverware, while other decorative drawings by Cauvet are in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lille, and the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum and Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.