Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



19th Century FRENCH SCHOOL

Study for the Refortification of Paris: Designs for a Wooden Drawbridge over a Canal

Pen and black ink and watercolour, within a fictive drawn mount.

Numbered *PL-39.em* in red ink at the upper left.

Variously lettered and numbered in red ink, and with a scale in feet (*piedes*) in red ink at the lower right.

364 x 495 mm. (14 3/8 x 19 1/2 in.) [image]

443 x 575 mm. (17 3/8 x 22 5/8 in.) [sheet]

This large sheet may be included among a group of designs for elements of the refortification of Paris executed in the second decade of the 19th century. Several designs for a ring of detached forts surrounding the city were submitted to Napoleon in 1813 by the Central Committee on Fortifications, but the Emperor decided against implementing these designs for fear of causing undue alarm among the citizens of Paris. Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig in October 1813 and the subsequent occupation of Paris by coalition forces led French engineers to further examine ways of constructing defences at strategic points around the city.

This large drawing of a drawbridge leading to the gateway of a fortified tower would appear to be the result of such studies. A related drawing showing a plan, section and elevation of a tower with such a drawbridge, by the same hand as the present sheet and sharing the same provenance from the collection of the 1st Duke of Wellington, was sold alongside this drawing in 1980.

The military commander and statesman Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769-1852), retired from the army after his decisive victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. He then went into politics, later serving two terms as Prime Minister. The Duke assembled a large collection of fine and decorative arts, including paintings (mainly Dutch and Flemish Old Masters), furniture, sculpture, silver, porcelain and militaria, much of which was kept at his London residence of Apsley House.