

# STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



**Jean-Démouthène DUGOURC (Versailles 1749 - Paris 1825)**

**La Beauté sacrifiée aux Grâces, récompense les talents et est couronnée par l'Amour ('Beauty Sacrifices to the Graces, Rewards Talent, and is Crowned by Love')**

Pen and black ink and grey wash, with framing lines in brown ink. Oval.

Signed with the artist's monogram and dated *JDD / 1776* at the lower left.

Laid down an 18th century mount, inscribed *LA BEAUTÉ SACRIFICIE AUX GRACES, RECOMPANSE LES TALENTS, ET EST COURONNÉE PAR L'AMOUR*. in the outer margin, which is in turn laid down.

The whole overmounted with a second, later mount decorated with flowers and ribbons in pen and black ink and grey wash, within framing lines in black ink, bearing the title *LA BEAUTÉ / SACRIFICIE AUX GRACES, / Recompance les talents & est couronnée par / l'Amour*. at the bottom.

Further inscribed *Dessin Original / de Du Gourc. 1776* at the lower right of the overmount.

192 x 148 mm. (7 5/8 x 5 3/4 in.) [sheet, at greatest dimensions]

278 x 218 mm. (10 7/8 x 8 1/2 in.) [with mount, at greatest dimensions]

338 x 246 mm. (13 1/4 x 9 3/4 in.) [overmount]

Dated 1776, this highly finished drawing is an early work by Jean-Démouthène Dugourc. It depicts Beauty, crowned by Love, who sacrifices herself to the Three Graces on the right, while she rewards Talent – personified by figures representing Music, Painting and Military Courage – at her feet. The present sheet remains unconnected with any known work by Dugourc and, with its elaborately decorated mount, may well have been intended as an autonomous work of art in its own right, for

presentation or sale to a collector.

However, it has also been tentatively suggested that this drawing might be related to Dugourc's designs for the interior of the Château de Bagatelle in the Bois de Boulogne, constructed by the artist's brother-in-law Bélanger for the Comte d'Artois, brother of Louis XV. Nicknamed the 'Folie d'Artois', Bagatelle was a Neoclassical-style small pleasure pavilion famously built over sixty-four days in the autumn of 1777. (The Comte d'Artois thereby won a bet that he had made with his sister-in-law Marie Antoinette, who had wagered that the new château could not be completed in less than three months. It may also be noted that the central figure of Beauty in this drawing bears a passing resemblance to both Marie-Antoinette and the Comtesse d'Artois, Maria Theresa of Savoy, who had married the Comte d'Artois in 1773.) Some written descriptions of the decoration of Château de Bagatelle describe a set of painted doors by Dugourc depicting the Progress of Love in the two boudoirs on the first floor of the pavilion, alongside a series of six large, vertical Italianate landscape paintings by Hubert Robert. However, almost all of the original painted decorations in the Château de Bagatelle are no longer in situ, and much has been lost.

The present sheet can be grouped with a small number of stylistically comparable and equally highly finished oval drawings by Dugourc, each signed and dated 1776. A group of five pen and ink drawings illustrating the story of Cupid and Psyche, with similarly inscribed mounts, were formerly in the collections of Jean Masson and Florence J. Gould, while a pair of oval drawings of *L'Amour enchaîné par les Grâces* and *Les Grâces couronnées par l'Amour* appeared at auction in Paris in 1919. The late 19th century French collector Jean Masson's fine group of ornamental drawings and prints, much of which was bequeathed to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, included two further oval drawings of this type by Dugourc, depicting *Le Désir et le Mystère conduisant la Jeunesse à l'Amour* and *Les Grâces conduisant l'Amour à la Fidélité* and both dated 1776, which were sold at auction in 1923. Like the present sheet, all of these drawings executed in 1776 may have been intended as designs for a now-lost decorative scheme in the Château de Bagatelle, completed the following year.

#### **Artist description:**

A hugely inventive and gifted artist and designer, Jean-Démsthène Dugourc was active as a painter, draughtsman, watercolourist, decorator, engraver and sculptor, while also producing designs for book illustrations and frontispieces, furniture, stage sets and costumes, and fabrics. Born to a wealthy and socially prominent family – his father was in the service of the Duc d'Orléans – the young Dugourc was permitted to study alongside the Duc's son Louis Philippe II, the future Philippe-Egalité, who was two years older. He received a classical education at the Oratorian-run Collège de July and showed an aptitude for drawing and an interest in perspective and the study of architecture from an early age. At fifteen Dugourc made a brief trip to Rome, where he met the German art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who inspired a fondness for antiquity in the young artist. Following the death of his mother and the loss of his father's wealth after a lawsuit, Dugourc decided to devote himself to a career as a professional artist. In 1776 he married the sister of the architect François-Joseph Bélanger, Inspecteur des menus-plaisirs and court architect to Charles-Philippe, Comte d'Artois and brother of Louis XVI, and the future Charles X. Dugourc began collaborating with his brother-in-law on the decoration of the chateaux of Bagatelle, Saint-Cloud and Maisons. He also designed country houses and gardens for two of the wealthiest men in France, the banker Jean-Joseph de Laborde and the financier Claude Baudard de Saint-James, Treasurer of the Navy, while other clients included the Duchesse de Mazarin and the Duc d'Aumont.

In 1780 Dugourc was appointed designer in the household of the King's brother, the Comte de Provence, for whom he worked on the decoration of the Château de Brunoy, now demolished. Two years later he published a series of engravings entitled *Arabesques*. In 1784 he was named dessinateur du garde-meuble de la couronne; in this role he was responsible for the design of interiors, furnishings and objects for the various royal palaces and chateaux, until the Revolution. Dugourc was, in fact, one of the first artists to introduce arabesque ornamentation, as well as Etruscan motifs, into

architecture, furniture and fabrics during the reign of Louis XVI. He also provided scenery for the Paris Opéra and worked for the Swedish, Spanish and Russian courts, as well as supplying designs for cabinetmakers such as Georges Jacob and for the Pernon silk manufactory in Lyon between 1774 and 1790. In 1800 he went to Spain, where he was appointed architect at the court of Charles IV. Dugourc worked in Spain for fourteen years, in Madrid and at Aranjuez and the Escorial, and among his patrons were such members of the Spanish aristocracy as the Duchess of Alba and the Duchess of Osuna. Within two years of his return to France in 1814 he was reinstated as dessinateur du garde-meuble, working at the Tuileries and for the tapestry manufactories at Savonnerie and Beauvais, as well as continuing to produce designs for Pernon. Dugourc died in Paris in 1825, at the age of seventy-five.

Large groups of drawings by Dugourc are today in the collections of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris – mainly designs for projects commissioned by the Royal family - and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Lyon. Other drawings by the artist are in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Cooper Hewitt Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Louvre and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and elsewhere.