

Attributed to Jean-Jacques LAGRENÉE (Paris 1739 - Paris 1821)

An Angel in Mourning Before a Funerary Monument

Pen and black ink and grey wash, extensively heightened with white, on blue prepared paper.

Inscribed in Latin and dated *minibus Sororis dilectis* / *frater moereus hoc mon* / *monumentum fit anno* / *1783* at the lower right.

408 x 262 mm. (16 1/8 x 10 1/4 in.)

As Benjamin Peronnet has pointed out, Lagrenée '*copied antiquity or rather reinterpreted it in his own way throughout his career...Lagrenée's antiquity, like his mythological or historical scenes, is attractive and arranged in a picturesque and especially decorative way.*' The artist frequently experimented with different techniques in his work, and as a draughtsman was particularly fond of applying highlights in gold, often on prepared paper washed brown or a deep blue. As Victor Carlson has noted, '*One of the most delightful aspects of Lagrenée's art is his chiaroscuro drawings on blue paper, where the support is tinted with gouache or watercolour...creating a ground against which the figures are defined with black ink and white highlights. This combination of media is used to evoke a scintillating play of light over surfaces...The fact that highly finished chiaroscuro drawings...can be found throughout Europe at this time is one aspect of the growing preference for drawings as independent works of art.*'

Lagrenée rarely signed his highly-finished drawings, which were nevertheless much sought-after by

collectors. The Latin inscription on the present sheet may be approximately translated as '*To his beloved sister, a grieving brother erected this monument in the year 1783.*'

Artist description:

A pupil of his elder brother, Louis-Jean-François Lagrenée, called Lagrenée l'aîné, Jean-Jacques Lagrenée (also known as 'Lagrenée the Younger') studied at the Ecole Royale des Elèves Protégés and earned a second-place prize in the Prix de Rome competition of 1760. The same year he accompanied his brother to Saint Petersburg, where Louis had been appointed painter at the court of the Empress Catherine the Great and Director of the Saint Petersburg Academy. The two brothers remained in Russia until 1762, when they returned to Paris. In 1765 Jean-Jacques left for Rome, where he was able to study at the Académie de France, although not officially as a pensionnaire. It was in Rome, where he lived until 1769, that the younger Lagrenée developed a particular love of classical art, and made an intensive study of such archeological discoveries as ancient Roman wall paintings and decorations. He produced a number of drawings of frieze-like compositions of antique vases, armour and objects, usually on blue paper, and several of these were published in 1765 as Fragments d'antiquités. He also established a reputation as a painter of decorative ceiling paintings, winning a commission from the Roman senator Abbondio Rezzonico in 1768 to decorate his Roman residence, the Palazzo Senatorio, with ceiling paintings that were much admired. Soon after his return to Paris in 1769, Lagrenée was tasked with a cycle of paintings for the abbey of Montmartre, a commission he shared with the painters Charles de La Traverse and Michel Honoré Bounieu. He also painted history subjects and ceiling paintings for the Galerie d'Apollon in the Louvre and at the Petit Trianon at Versailles.

Admitted into the Académie Royale in 1775, Lagrenée exhibited paintings and drawings of historical and Biblical subjects at the Salons between 1771 and 1804 and received commissions from such important patrons as the Comte d'Angiviller. His skill as a decorator was also readily evident in his activity as the artistic director of the Sèvres porcelain factory between 1785 and 1800, for whom he created numerous designs, notably the Etruscan service for Marie-Antoinette's dairy at Rambouillet. He also produced a large number of etchings, both original designs and reproductive works after other artists. After 1805, however, Lagrenée seems to have stopped exhibiting, and he ended his career in relative obscurity. While comparatively few paintings by the artist are known today, a significant group of drawings by Lagrenée is in the Louvre, while others are in the collections of the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin, the Harvard University Art Museums in Cambridge (MA), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen, the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, and elsewhere.