

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Circle of Pierre-Louis MOREAU-DESPROUX (Paris 1727 - Paris 1794)

Project for a Temple of Hymen

Pen and black ink and grey wash, within a fictive drawn mount with a black border.

Titled TEMPLE DE L'HIMEN. at the top of the sheet.

305 x 385 mm. (12 x 15 1/8 in.) [image]

320 x 403 mm. (12 5/8 x 15 7/8 in.) [sheet]

Watermark: *D. & C. BLAUW* with a crown and a fleur-de-lys.

Monique Mossère has suggested that this drawing may be related to the public celebrations honouring either the marriage of Louis XVI or the birth of the Dauphin. Moreau-Desproux was involved in the plans for the Fête celebrating the marriage of the future Louis XVI to Marie Antoinette in 1770, as well as the festival organized in 1782 in honour of the birth of the Dauphin. For the latter, Moreau-Desproux is known to have designed a fireworks decoration in the form of a Temple of Hymen standing on the base of a rock, surrounded by fountains and triumphal columns. As Suzanne Boorsch has noted, '*The last great fête of the ancien regime in France was for the birth of the dauphin, on October 22, 1781. Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette had been married eleven years before a son was born, and the long-awaited event inspired lavish celebrations over several days, with no regard for difficulty or expense. The date chosen for the fireworks was January 21, 1782. The structure from behind which the fireworks would be shot off [was] erected on the Place de la Grève in front of the Hôtel de Ville... following the design of the city architect Pierre-Louis Moreau-Desproux.*' A large and highly-finished drawing for this project, attributed to Moreau-Desproux, is today in the Musée Carnavalet in Paris, while another sizeable drawing of the same fireworks machine, attributed to Louis-Gustave Taraval after a design by Moreau-Desproux, is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Exhibitions

New York, The Clarendon Gallery at Shepherd Gallery Associates, *Architectural Drawings*, 1987, no.38; Stanford, Stanford University, Cantor Center for Visual Arts, *Classic Taste: Drawings and Decorative Arts from the Collection of Horace Brock*, 2000.

Literature:

New York, The Clarendon Gallery at Shepherd Gallery, *Architectural Drawings: An Exhibition of 18th and 19th Century British and Continental Architectural Drawings, Topographical Watercolours and Interiors*, exhibition catalogue, 1987, p.15, no.38.

Artist description:

Although Pierre-Louis Moreau-Desproux competed for the Prix de Rome in architecture for three consecutive years between 1750 and 1752 without success, he was nevertheless able to go to Rome to study when his friend, the architect Charles de Wailly, offered to share his prize. The two were in Rome between 1754 and 1757, and Moreau-Desproux took part in excavations with de Wailly and a fellow architect, Marie-Joseph Peyre. Among Moreau-Desproux's first architectural commissions was the design of the Hôtel de Chavannes in Paris in 1758, for the financier Jacques de Chavannes. He was accepted into the Académie Royale de Architecture in 1762, and the following year was appointed surintendant des bâtiments for the city of Paris, a post he held until 1787. In this capacity, in which he succeeded his uncle Jean-Baptiste-Augustin Basire, Moreau-Desproux was entrusted with the supervision of a wide range of public works in the city, including the design of decorations of important festivals. He was also charged with the rebuilding of the Opéra at the Palais-Royal, on which he worked between 1763 and 1770, as well as the remodeling of the interior of the Hôtel de Luyne in 1767 and the Hôtel de Ville. Moreau-Desproux died on the guillotine in 1793.