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The Art of France, 1700-1800

The lighthearted, elaborate style of painting that emerged in the early 18th century provided a reprieve from the drama and grandeur of the Baroque. Known as the Rococo, this style embraced the ornate qualities of Baroque art while introducing a lighter palette and less somber themes. Frolicking lovers and mythological figures replaced religious stories and saints. The decorative arts flourished as well; furniture, metalwork, and porcelain embraced asymmetrical shapes and decorative motifs taken from nature, such as foliage and shells. A combination of styles, Rococo is taken from the French word for shell (*rocaille*) and the Italian baroque (*barocco*).

By mid-century, as revolutionary fervor mounted in Europe, artists began rejecting the opulence of the Rococo and its association with such extravagant rulers as Louis XV and Marie Antoinette, the wife of Louis XVI. Challenging the ideas of despotism and absolute sovereignty, they embraced a style inspired by ancient Greece and Rome. Neoclassicism was a reaction to the extremes of the Rococo, and was characterized by classical forms and subjects and a more restrained palette. Especially popular in France, this new style became the hallmark of the academies, whose leaders argued for the superiority of history painting.



Elisabeth Louise Vigée-Le Brun

French, 1755-1842, active in France, Russia, and Italy

Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, c. 1785

Pastel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 383

Vigée Le Brun is widely considered the most important female artist of the 18th century. Born in Paris, where she also studied and became friends with Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Joseph Vernet, and other important Neoclassical painters, Vigée Le Brun became a member of the Academy of Saint Luke and the Royal Academy, and later married the artist, Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Le Brun. Her training as a portrait painter brought her to Versailles where she was

invited to paint Queen Marie Antoinette. In the late 1770s, the Queen commissioned her to paint additional portraits, including portraits of her children and the royal household.



Claude Jacquet

French, after 1632, active in Paris

Harpsichord, 1652

Carved, painted, and gilded wood

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 1108



Antoine Pesne

French, 1683-1757, active in Paris and Berlin

***Philippine Charlotte, Princess of Prussia and
Duchess of Brunswick, c. 1735-50***

Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 377

Antoine Pesne was born into a French family of artists with his father and his uncle, Charles de la Fosse, as his first teachers. In 1711 he went to Berlin to tutor Prince Friedrich in art, and he remained in this city for most of his life. Pesne was known as a portraitist, and his oeuvre personifies the international world of diplomacy in the 18th century and the role of portraiture among royalty and nobility. The sitter, Philippine Charlotte (1716-1801), was the daughter of Frederick William I of Prussia and the sister of Frederick the Great.



Anton Raphael Mengs

German, 1728-1779, active in Dresden and Rome

The Dream of Joseph, c. 1773

Oil on wood panel

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 328

The German-born Mengs spent most of his career in Rome where he played an important role in the development of the Neoclassical movement, which espoused the cultural ideals of classical Greek and Roman civilizations. He shared a friendship with the German archaeologist, Johann Winckelmann, a champion of the new science of archaeology. The painting's subject is taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew, in which an angel appears to Joseph in a dream and whispers the truth about

Mary's conception.



Noël-Nicolas Coypel

French, 1690-1734

Portrait of Madame de Bourbon-Conti as Venus, 1731

Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 381

Many famous women bore the name Bourbon-Conti, and the sitter portrayed here is likely Louise-Diane d'Orleans, princesse de Conti, the daughter of Philippe II, Duke d'Orleans. Philippe was Regent of France before Louis XV assumed the throne. Noël-Nicolas was the son of the famous Noël Coypel and had two brothers who were painters. Indicative of the flourishes of the Rococo brush, and Coypel's own penchant for sumptuous drapery and clouds, the princess is shown in an elegant spiral, enveloped with pastel tones.



Jean Raoux

French, 1677-1734, active in Paris

Girl Playing with a Bird on a String, 1717

Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 375

Jean Raoux excelled as a portrait and history painter; however, his paintings of subjects from everyday life (called genre scenes) were widely popular with his audiences and with other Rococo painters. Scenes of children playing were particularly fashionable, and a major theme was the loss of childhood innocence. In this example, the young girl treats the bird as a toy and seems to delight in its helplessness. It is more likely, though, that this apparently harmless image represents a misogynist cliché of the fiction of the time – women who toy with men's affections.



Jean-Marc Nattier

French, 1685-1766, active in Paris

Portrait of an Aristocratic Youth (possibly the Duc de Chaulnes) as Bacchus, c. 1730

Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 380

After winning first prize at the Royal Academy at the age of 15, Nattier turned down the invitation to study in Rome and traveled to Amsterdam, where he executed several paintings for Peter the Great of Russia and the empress Catherine. Returning to Paris in 1720, Nattier settled into life as a portraitist in the court of Louis XV, specializing in highly idealized portraits of royal and court

personages in the guise of ancient deities. Here, the ungodlike figure of the heavysset youth has been made into the image of Bacchus, the God of Wine.



Pierre Goudréaux

French, 1694-1731, active in Mannheim, Germany

The Lovers' Pilgrimage, c. 1725

Oil on canvas

Museum purchase, 1952, SN 671

Goudréaux's style embodies the highest artistic and technical traditions of the Rococo style, though he was also active as a court painter in Germany where his art was especially prized. The pilgrim's staff and cockleshell adornment usually allude to St. James the Great and the countless pilgrimages made to his shrine in Compostella, Spain. In this painting, however,

the implicit sensuality in the fluid contours of the figures suggests the metaphor of the "pilgrims" as voyagers to Cythera, the mythical island sacred to Venus.



Carle van Loo
French, 1705-1765

*Portrait of Chevalier Louis Eusèbe de
Montour,*
c. 1750
Oil on canvas

Gift of Miss Louise Marock, 1965, SN 786



J. d'Audenaerde
French, active c. 1772 in Lille

*Juno Commands Aeolus to
Release the Winds,*
c. 1733-37
Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936,
SN 374

This painting is the only extant
work by a little-known artist who

belonged to the circle of Charles Antoine Coypel, nephew of Noël Nicolas Coypel. Basing his composition on a work by the French painter Jean Restout, d'Audenaerde depicts the opening passage of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Furious that the Trojan hero Aeneas was destined to found Rome, the Greek goddess Juno commanded the keeper of the winds, Aeolus, to unleash mighty gales (shown as muscular, winged figures) that would disrupt the Aeneas' voyage toward Italy.



Johann Georg Ziesenis

German, 1716-1776

Portrait of a Young Lady

Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 327



Jean-Baptiste Greuze

French, 1725-1805

***Meditation*, c. 1780**

Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 382

Greuze had hoped to be admitted to the Academy as a history painter, but the Academy members, drawn to his more sentimental pictures such as this work, admitted him as a genre painter. The woman, shown in the guise of a Roman vestal virgin, is likely thinking about whether she should remain a virgin, rather than contemplating the loftier aspects of love. The intact wreath of flowers signifies her virginity, and her devotion to the concept of chastity is confirmed by the position of her arm on the altar, which prevents the two doves from mating. The elaborate 18th-century frame was likely made expressly for the painting.



France

18th century, Louis XVI period (1774-1793)

Mantel Clock, c. 1790

Rock crystal, gilded bronze, enamel

Gift of Mrs. William Sisler/Mary Sisler
Foundation, 1977,
SN 7427



Claude Michelle, called Clodion, follower
of
French, 1738-1814

***An Arcadian Family (Bacchante, Satyr,
and Child)***

Terracotta

Museum purchase with Funds from Mrs.
William Sisler/Mary Sisler Foundation, SN
5527



Michel-François Dandré-Bardon
French, 1700-1783, active in Paris and Rome

Saint John the Baptist Preaching
Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 169



France
18th century, Louis XV period (1723-1774)

Console Table
Carved and gilded wood, and marble

Gift of Mrs. William Sisler/Mary Sisler
Foundation, 1977,
MF 77.6



Italy (Venice)
18th century

Console Table, c. 1750
Carved and gilded wood

Museum Purchase, 1949, SN 1531



**Michel-François Dandré-
Bardon**

French, 1700-1783, active in
Paris and Rome

***Saint John the Baptist
Preaching***

Oil on canvas

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936,
SN 169