

## DRAWINGS OF MODELS FOR ENGRAVINGS

After his bankruptcy in 1778, Jean-Louis Prieur took refuge in the Enclos du Temple under the protection of the Count of Artois to escape his creditors and royal jurisdiction. His activity as an ornamental sculptor now predominated, as attested by the many collections of drawings and engravings now in existence<sup>78</sup>. This also enabled him to compensate for his loss of clientele and the decline of his founder-chaser's workshop.

### The ornaments for parcloses

Drawn by Prieur and engraved by Fay, seven *Cahiers de sujets arabesques* numbered X to XVI were published by Mondhare & Jean after 1784. In the 1770s and 80s, the arabesque genre then in vogue spawned numerous albums for use by artists as models. Depicting fanciful figures and naturalist ornamental motifs mirrored on either side of a vertical axis, these compositions were intended to be painted on panelling. Delicate and pleasant to the eye, they were ideal for intimate rooms such as the boudoir. Two parclose ornaments dating from around 1784 from the Kraemer Collection depict antique-inspired



Ill. 5 and 6 Parclose ornaments, circa 1784. Pen, black ink, sepia and blue watercolour. Kraemer Collection, Photo Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris / Jean Tholance

7. Apart from the collection of drawings in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, there are also those in the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris, Waddesdon Manor, the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin and the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.  
8. Désiré Guilhard, *Les Maîtres ornemanistes [...]* (Paris, E. Plon, 1880) 2 vol., p. 256-258.

motifs such as smoking cassolettes and the imperial eagle, with plump children and garlands of flowers (ill. 5 and 6). Combined in numerous variations, these compositions in an easily recognisable style exude the *joie de vivre* so typical of Prieur's work.

### The Suites de Vases

In 1783, three *Suites de Vases* were published, drawn and engraved by the artist and dedicated to the Chevalier de Crussol, bailli (king's administrative representative) of the Enclos du Temple. These prints have enabled us to identify two drawings of vases. The one decorated with caryatids (ill. 7), figures then fashionable inspired by the Kanephoros caryatids on the Erechtheion in Athens, is part of the 1<sup>ère</sup> *Suite*. The vase with satyrs' head mascarons and bacchic decoration<sup>9</sup> was published in the second series. The model with handles in the form of satyresses<sup>10</sup> was probably engraved by Fay for the XI<sup>e</sup> *Cahier de Vases*, published by Jean after 1792. The four models with arabesque decoration largely depict the plump children so characteristic of Jean-Louis Prieur's style<sup>11</sup>. The engraving of the one with handles in the form of infant tritons is in the V<sup>e</sup> *Cahier de Vases*, drawn by Prieur and engraved by Fay, published by Mondhare & Jean between 1784 and 1792.

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Ill. 7 Model for a vase, circa 1783, inv. 8527, Photo Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris

9. inv. 8471.  
10. inv. CD 419.  
11. inv. CD 418, CD 420, 3412 and 3413.

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# DRAWING AND CHASING BRONZE

## JEAN-LOUIS PRIEUR (1732 - 1795)

> MUSÉE NISSIM DE CAMONDO

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ill. 1 Design for a wall lamp for the Assembly Hall in the Royal Castle, Warsaw. Frontal view. Jean-Louis Prieur (1732-1795), circa 1779. Pen, black ink and watercolour on vergé paper. University of Warsaw Library, Department of Prints, King Stanislas Auguste Poniatowski Collection, inv. zb.d. 8358 (royal collection P. 183 no. 246), Photo University of Warsaw Library

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The sculptor and chaser Jean-Louis Prieur was one of the most illustrious bronze smelters of the neoclassical period. He was born into a family of Parisian artisans specialised in the decorative arts: his father, Louis Prieur, was a master fan maker, and his uncle, Joseph de Saint-Germain, a master cabinetmaker. The latter's son, Jean-Joseph de Saint-Germain (1719-1791), master founder in 1746, played a leading role in the very active world of the Parisian founders and chasers, and it may indeed have been in his workshop that Jean-Louis Prieur served his apprenticeship. Admitted to the Académie de Saint-Luc as a master sculptor in 1765, he became a master founder "in clay and sand" in 1769 but never exercised the profession of founder in the true sense. Like many of his counterparts at the head of large workshops, Jean-Louis Prieur was a "founder-chaser," meaning that he did not have the equipment for founding pieces.

This exhibition features twenty-one drawings attributed to him from the Musée des Arts Décoratifs' Department of Prints and Drawings and the Kraemer Collection. This selection includes models for bronzes, circa 1770, and others for engravings of ornamental supports and vases, circa 1783. They reflect the evolution in Jean-Louis Prieur's career, who became an ornamental sculptor after his bankruptcy in 1778.

This ensemble is complemented by the exceptional loan of two drawings by the artist in the University of Warsaw Library (ill. 1) directly referring to works kept in the Musée Nissim de Camondo<sup>1</sup>, and three etchings of vases in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France's Department of Prints and Photography and the Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs. The "Allegory of Study" clock, circa 1770, a prestigious loan from the Musée du Louvre, is one of the rare bronzes signed by the artist.

#### THE DRAWINGS OF MODELS FOR BRONZES

Around 1770, Jean-Louis Prieur was undoubtedly one of the first professional draughtsmen. He produced drawings of models for bronzes so that they could be registered and protected. These pieces are represented symmetrically on either side of a central vertical axis. Executed in pen and black ink, sometimes over a



Ill. 2 Model for a fireplace disguised as a console table, circa 1771-72, inv. 8531, Photo Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris

graphite drawing, they were then heightened with sepia watercolour on a grey wash ground. None of the drawings are signed.

#### The fireplaces

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, marble fireplaces decorated with gilt bronzes were specially commissioned luxury creations. The drawing of a fireplace disguised as a console table (ill. 2) has been identified as corresponding to the description in the 1779 inventory of the "small apartments" in the Palais Bourbon, the stylish mansion built in 1771-1772 by Billard de Bellissard for Louis-Joseph de Bourbon, Prince of Condé. The round, domed drawing room had a fireplace "with a white marble table supported by bronze legs gilded with ground gold. The firedogs are linked to these supports, so that it can effectively serve as a table in summer by adding the rear panel"<sup>2</sup>. The number "2" written in ink suggests that this drawing may have been destined to be shown to a buyer, in this case the Duke of Bourbon. The model for a four-legged console table with adjoining firedogs is also a disguised fireplace, and probably a variation of the preceding project<sup>3</sup>.

#### The console tables

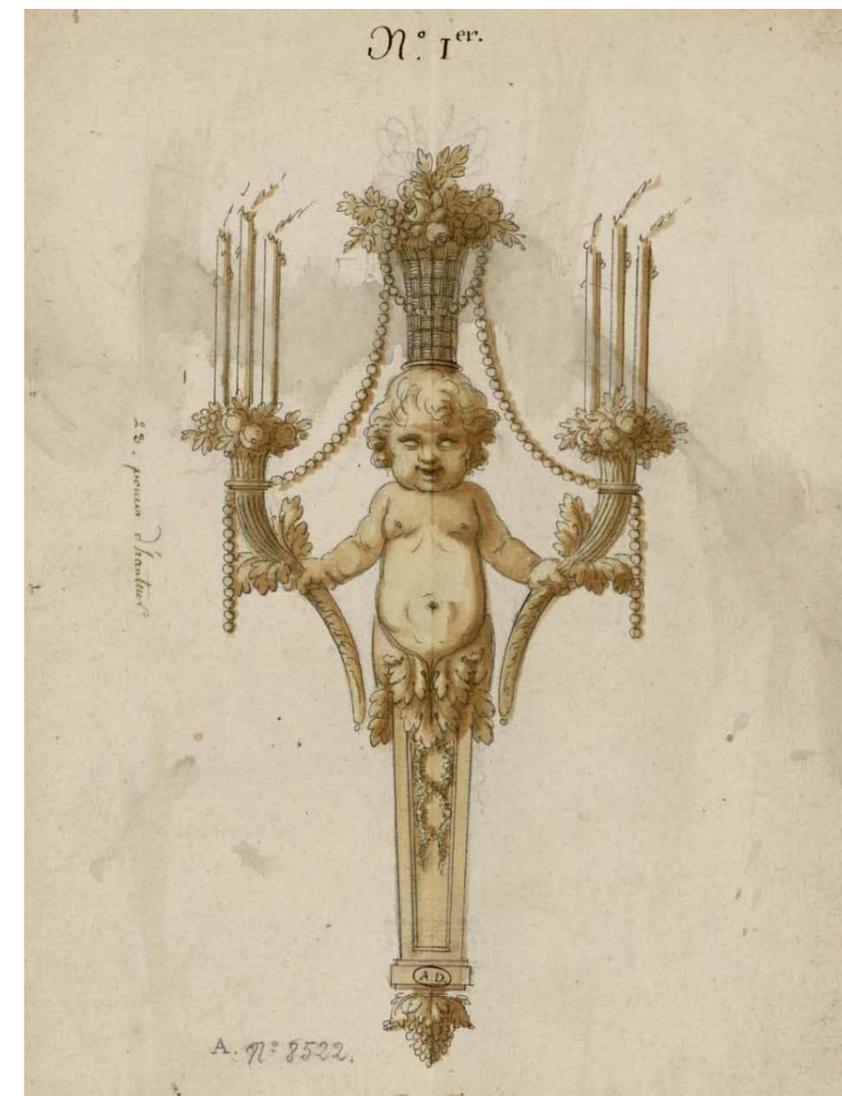
The console table's decoration usually echoed that of the fireplace because they were often placed opposite one another. On the rim of the four-legged table (ill. 3) there is a medallion with two interlaced Ls. The presence of the royal monogram would indicate that this model was destined for the king, for whom Jean-Louis Prieur had already worked: in 1775, he delivered the bronzes of Louis XVI's coronation carriage, after drawings by Bélanger. The intersection of the cross-struts is decorated with an eagle cut in two in the middle. The four tapering, rectangular legs are surmounted by busts of women "in the antique style." This exceptional model for a console table is reminiscent of the luxurious example in the Frick Collection, created in Turquin blue marble around 1780, whose bronzes are attributed to Pierre Gouthière<sup>4</sup>. A second project shows a "d'entre-deux" console table with one fluted leg with a satyr's mask, one of the artist's recurrent motifs, with radiating garlands of fruit and bunches of grapes<sup>5</sup>.



Ill. 3 Model for a four-legged console table, circa 1775, inv. 8529, Photo Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris

#### The lamps

Children, chubby, pot-bellied and often laughing, are frequently represented on Jean-Louis Prieur's models for candelabra, torch lamps, bras de lumière and chandeliers. The drawing of a wall lamp with two bras de lumière bears the inscription "N° 1<sup>er</sup>" (ill. 4). It may also have been destined to be shown to a client or marchand mercier (furniture supplier). Three candles rise from the arms in the form of a horn of plenty. The lamp's body is formed by a term figure of a child bearing a basket of flowers on its head, from which garlands of beads are departing to the horns of plenty. The model is large: "23 inches high" and "14 inches wide" (62.2 x 37.8 cm). The model for a six-branched chandelier, on the other hand, has the rarer decoration of a military trophy<sup>6</sup>. Formed by a lictor's fasces surmounted by a plumed helmet crowned by an eagle, the chandelier's stem is surrounded by four standards, above an oval medallion with a beaming sun. The dimensions are also indicated: "3 ½ feet high" (approx. 1.13 m).



Ill. 4 Design for a wall lamp, circa 1770, inv. 8522, Photo Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris

1. The eight wall lamps (CAM 12 and 40) executed c. 1780 by J.-L. Prieur for the Royal Castle in Warsaw and the two console tables (CAM 190) produced from his designs for the same residence, c. 1766.

2. Jacques Wilhelm, "La coupole peinte par Antoine Callet pour le salon de compagnie des petits appartements du Palais-Bourbon," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français*, 1979, p. 168, fig. 4, repr.

3. Inv. CD 412

4. Pierre Verlet, *Bronzes dorés français du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Picard, 2003) p. 48, fig. 44, repr.

5. Inv. 8530

6. Inv. 8520