GIRODET



Anne-Louis Girodet

1767 Montargis - Paris 1824

Two recently discovered drawings



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Autoportrait au foulard et au chapeau, c.1790, black chalk, with stumping, heightened with white, 216 x175 mm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, the Delia E. Holden Fund [inv. 1978.79]

ANNE-LOUIS GIRODET – LIFE AND WORK

Anne-Louis Girodet de Roucy [Girodet-Trioson] was born in Montargis in 1767. His father managed the estate of the Duc d'Orléans. Girodet was named 'de Roucy' after a forest near the family home. At the age of seven he was sent to Paris to receive a comprehensive classical education. He lived in the household of Dr. Benoît Trioson, who became his tutor and guardian, later adopting him after the early death of his parents.

In 1783, Girodet took up his studies at the Académie Royale in Paris. He became a pupil of the architect Etienne-Louis Boullée, who persuaded him to study painting under Jacques-Louis David. In late 1784, he joined David's studio. He was a member of the highly successful first generation of students taught by David, which included Drouais, Fabre, Gérard, Gros and Wicar. Faced with such competition, Girodet was prompted to pitch his own skills against those of his fellow students and his master at an early stage. As one of David's most talented students he twice competed for the Prix de Rome before finally winning it in 1789 with a painting titled *Joseph recommu par ses frères* (École des Beaux-Arts, Paris). The award brought him a royal bursary funding an extended stay in Rome to further his studies at the Académie de France.

In spring 1790, Girodet arrived in Italy. In the following year he painted the highly successful *Sommeil d'Endymion* (Musée du Louvre). The work signalled a major break with the aesthetics of his master, David. The scene is devoid of heroic or moral content. The portrayal of the elongated body of Endymion is almost mannerist in style and evokes the figures of Correggio or the images of martyrs in the Baroque. The strong chiaroscuro and subtle use of *sfumato* have little in common with Neoclassicism. The painting has undercurrents of melodrama and a troubling, coldly sensuous atmospheric quality that provides a foretaste of Romanticism. It was shown at the Salon of 1793 and won him the recognition of the leading writers Chateaubriand, Balzac and Baudelaire who praised its unique poetic qualities. Still in Italy, Girodet began working for the French publisher Pierre Didot l'ainé (1761-1853), producing illustration designs for editions of Virgil (1798) and Racine (1801-5).

On his return to Paris in 1795 he opened a studio, and recognition of his talent as a portraitist quickly followed. His painting of Jean-Baptiste Belley (1797, Château de Versailles), a former slave from Saint-Domingue in the French West Indies and the first black member of the Convention nationale, is one of the outstanding portraits of the Revolutionary period. Girodet's satiric portrait of the fashionable actress Anne-Françoise-Elisabeth Lange, Mademoiselle Lange en Danaë (Minneapolis Institute of Arts), caused public outrage at the 1799 Salon. The monumental Scène du deluge (1806, Musée du Louvre) shows Girodet's ambitions as a history painter. The work depicts five full-length figures linked in agonized contortions on a slippery rock. The painting was awarded the decennial prize in 1810, triumphing over Jacques-Louis David's Les Sabines (1799, Musée du Louvre). L'Apothéose des héros français morts pour la patrie pendant la guerre de la Liberté also known as Ossian recevant les ombres des héros français was commissioned by the architects Charles Percier and Pierre-François Fontaine to decorate the Salon doré in Napoleon's country retreat at Malmaison (1802, Châteaux de Malmaison). At the time, François Gérard was also working on an Ossianic subject for Malmaison. In an effort to outdo Gérard, Girodet spent fifteen months on the Apothéose, a highly complex, part-political, part-allegorical work. He went on to receive further Imperial commissions, among them Napoléon recevant les clefs de Vienne (1808) and La Révolte du Caire (1808-10, Château de Versailles). In 1808, he experienced his greatest success with Atala au tombeau (1807, Musée du Louvre), inspired by Chateaubriand's novel Atala (1800). Girodet's painting perfectly matched the poetic and exotic tone of the text and it was one of the most popular works at the 1808 Salon.

Girodet was a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the Institut de France. He exhibited at the Salon from 1793 to 1824. He was active as a teacher and had a large number of pupils. Since 1811 he composed illustrations to the lyric poems of Anacreon and Virgil's *Aeneid* and was also a prolific writer and poet in his own right. He died in 1824 at the age of fifty-seven and was buried in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris.

ANNE-LOUIS GIRODET

1767 Montargis - Paris 1824

Portrait de François Pascal Simon Gérard, dit baron Gérard (1770 Rome - Paris 1837)

Black chalk, stomping, heightened with white, on paper; executed in 1789. Overall diameter: 111 mm

PROVENANCE: Alexandre Gérard, brother of the artist – Thence by descent

LITERATURE: Charles Lenormant, 'François Gérard, peintre d'histoire', in *Le Correspondant*, XI, Paris 1845, p. 541 – Id., François Gérard peintre d'histoire. Essai de biographie et de critique, Paris 1847, pp. 35-6 – Philippe de Chennevières, Portraits inédits d'artistes français, Paris 1852, pp. 23-4, repr. p. 22 – Œuvre du baron François Gérard. Troisième et dernière partie, Paris 1857, n. p., described as: Girodet (1789). Dessin au crayon noir, d'une finesse admirable; la tête est vue de profil. – Henri Gérard (ed.) and Adolphe Viollet-le-Duc (preface), Correspondance de François Gérard, peintre d'histoire, avec les artistes et les personnages célèbres de son temps, Paris 1867, frontispiece – Anne Lafont, Une jeunesse artistique sous la Révolution. Girodet avant 1800, Phil. Diss., Paris 2001, I, p. 203-4, no. 51 – Bruno Chenique, La vie d'Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy (1767-1824), dit Girodet-Trioson. Essai de biochronologie, p. 157

LITHOGRAPH: By Frédéric Legrip, for Chennevières, op. cit., 1852, p. 22 [fig. 1]

ENGRAVING: By François Girard, frontispiece to Gérard and Viollet-le-Duc, op. cit., 1867 [fig. 2]

In 1780, Jacques-Louis David returned to Paris from Rome. Soon afterwards, he was able to establish a studio in the Louvre, which rapidly hosted a great number of pupils. David revolutionised teaching methods and codes of practice in painting, introducing a new moral seriousness. He opened up the studio to engravers and sculptors, and admitted women artists and painters from outside France. Girodet joined in 1784, Gérard in 1786. In this fertile and highly competitive artistic environment many friendships were forged. David's pupils vied to outdo one another in self-portraiture and the art of the *portrait intime*. Notable examples produced in the years 1789 to 1791 are Jean-Baptiste Isabey's portrait of Girodet [fig. 3]¹, Louis Boilly's double portrait of Chenard and Gérard [fig. 4], and the present portrait roundel of Gérard by Girodet.

This portrait is an outstanding early example of a 'friendship portrait' by a French artist. The genre would see its heyday in the early nineteenth century, particularly among German artists working in Rome. Changes in the social substructure of France brought about by the Revolution led to a dearth of portrait commissions from the nobility and encouraged the development of a new self-confidence and sense of egalitarianism among artists. This development was to culminate in Louis Boilly's seminal work *La Réunion d'artistes dans l'atelier d'Isabey* (1798, Musée du Louvre), in which both Gérard and Girodet prominently portrayed. The appearance of reciprocal portraits among studio fellow-artists is therefore hardly surprising.

Girodet and Gérard worked together as pupils in David's studio from 1786 to 1789. The present drawing was executed in 1789, as the lettering on Girard's engraving [fig. 2] indicates. The drawing depicts Gérard at the age of twenty-two. His profile and features are finely delineated, his long wavy hair is delicately articulated and rendered with striking vitality. The soft material of his woollen coat has an extraordinarily tactile quality. The circular format of the miniature and the choice of a profile-view pose are consonant with eighteenth-century tradition, but the naturalness, spontaneity and psychological intensity of the portrait reveal an innovative and forward-looking approach. Other pupils



actual size

responded similarly to David's teaching, as is evidenced by Isabey's *Portrait de Girodet*. Executed in the same year, it stands on an equal footing with Girodet's drawing in terms of format, medium and style [fig. 3].

In his description of the present drawing, Charles Lenormant, the first biographer of Gérard, alludes to the life-long rivalry between Gérard and Girodet: C'est pendant son séjour dans l'école de David que celui de ses rivaux dont le nom a été prononcé le plus souvent à côté du sien fixa sur le papier, dans un dessin rempli d'énergie et de grâce, le profil du jeune Romain, C'est déjà Gérard tout entier: la tête est belle, fine et fière; le regard éclate sous l'épaisse chevelure qui l'ombrage, Girodet a mis dans ce dessin tout ce qu'il pensait et tout ce qu'il craignait de son condisciple; il semble dire: Voici un homme qui me donnera du souci; mais je le lui rendrais bien!²

Girodet and Gérard were David's most talented pupils. But as pupils assisting in the execution of their master's paintings they stood under enormous pressure. In his 1827 essay on David, the art critic Pierre Alexandre Coupin gives an illuminating account of studio collaboration – and studio rivalries. He relates how Gérard and Girodet had been assigned the task of completing different sections of David's painting, *Les Licteurs rapportant à Brutus les corps de ses fils* (1789, Musée du Louvre), and how Gérard, who had been entrusted with part of the background, failed to make the head of Brutus stand out sufficiently. Not even David could resolve the problem, so Girodet was instructed to take over. Supremely self-confident and already a master of chiaroscuro, Girodet took up his palette and brushes unperturbed and completed the head to David's fullest satisfaction.³

In 1789, Gérard and Girodet both competed for the Prix de Rome, submitting paintings of the same subject – *Joseph reconnu par ses frères*. Girodet won the award, while Gérard was placed second. In 1801, they both received Imperial commissions to execute paintings on Ossianic themes for Napoleon's country retreat at Malmaison. Once again, they attempted to outdo each other. But there is no doubting Gérard's own success as a painter. In the late 1790s, he came to be regarded as one of the outstanding portraitists of his time. His output was prolific and many of Europe's foremost figures sat for him. He achieved fame and a considerable degree of affluence. Honours were heaped on him – they included being named baron of the Empire in 1809 under Napoleon, a member of the Institut de France in 1812 and first painter to Louis XVIII after the Restoration – but was nevertheless torn by remorse for earlier, unfulfilled ambitions in history painting.

Sidonie Lemeux-Fraitot will include the present drawing in her forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Girodet's work.

¹ See Jean-Loup Champion, 'Un théâtre de miroirs, les autoportraits de Girodet', in *Girodet 1767-1824*, exhib. cat., Musée du Louvre, Paris 2005, p. 98, fig. III, 52.

² Lenormant, op. cit., 1845, p. 541: It was during [Gérard's] time as a pupil of David that the one rival whose name has been pronounced most frequently beside his own name set down on paper the profile of the young Roman in a drawing replete with vigour and grace. It is wholly Gérard: his head handsome, fine and noble; his gaze forceful beneath the thick head of hair that shades it, Girodet has invested this drawing with the full measure of his opinion of his fellow student and the full measure of his fearfulness of him; as if to say: Here is a man who will give me cause for worry; but I would give him exactly the same!

³ Pierre Alexandre Coupin, Essai sur J. L. David, peintre d'histoire, ancien membre de l'Institut, officier de la Legion-d'honneur, Paris, 1827, pp. 62-3; cited in Chenique, op. cit., 2005, p. 157.

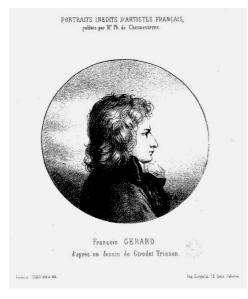


Fig. 1: Frédéric Legrip (after Girodet), Portrait of Gérard, lithograph for Ph. de Chennevières, Portraits inédits d'artistes français, Paris 1852, p. 22. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris





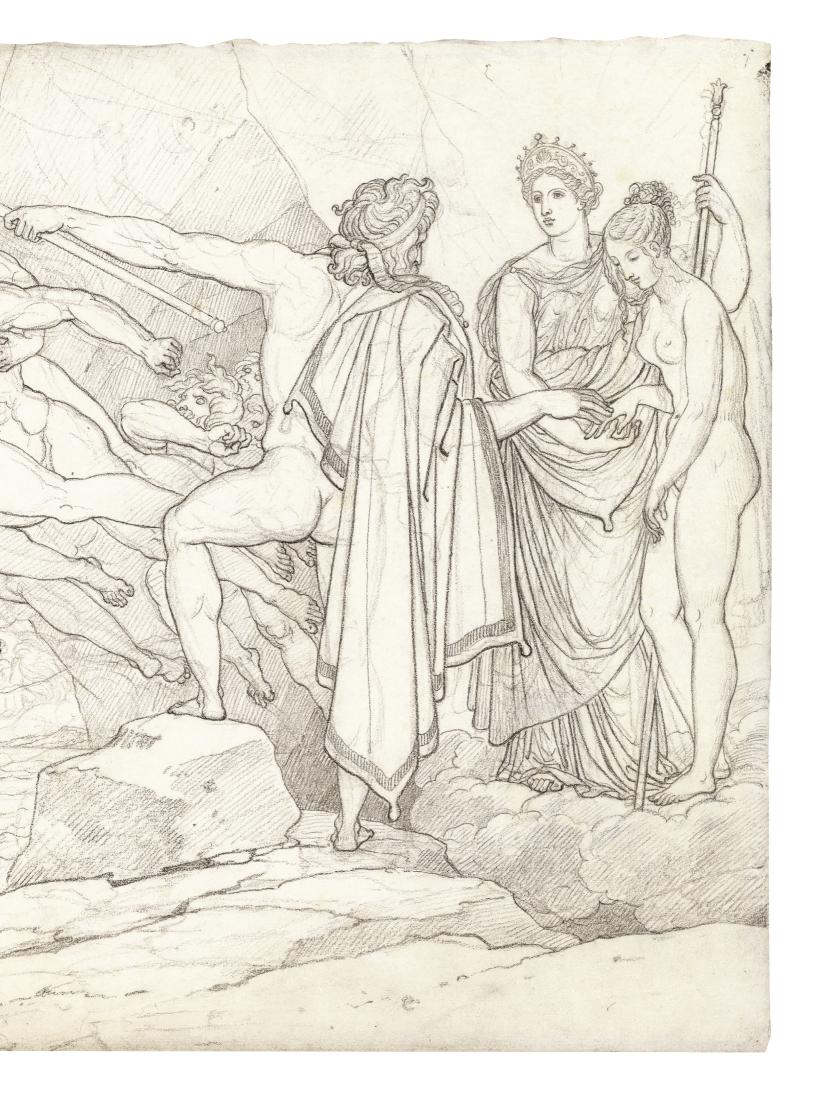
Fig. 2: François Girard (after Girodet), *Portrait of Gérard*, engraving (the lettering gives the date of the drawing: *Girodet delt. 1789*), frontispiece to H. Gérard and A. Viollet-le-Duc, *Correspondance de François Gérard* (...), Paris 1867. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Fig 3: Jean-Baptiste Isabey, *Portrait de Girodet,* black chalk with stomping, c.1789. Diam.: 117 mm. École des Beaux-Arts, Paris [inv. MU8645]



Fig. 4: Louis-Léopold Boilly, *Portraits de Simon Chenard* at the left *et François Gérard* at the right, c.1791, black chalk, heightened with white, 192 x 280 mm. Private collection, Paris, formerly with Le Claire Kunst (2015)





ANNE-LOUIS GIRODET

1767 Montargis - Paris 1824

Eole déchaîne les vents contre les vaisseaux troyens (Virgile, *Énéide*, I: 50-91)¹ *Aeolus unchains the Winds against the Trojan Fleet* (Virgil, *Aeneid*, I: 50-91)¹

Black chalk on paper; executed c.1811. 268 x 358 mm (image); 268 x 410 mm (sheet)

PROVENANCE: The Girodet estate sale, Paris, 11 April 1825 – Acquired by Antoine-Claude Pannetier (to 1859) – M. de la Bordes, Paris – Auction sale, Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 15 April 1867, lot 2 [listed as 170 dessins de Girodet compositions pour l'Eneïde et les Georgiques de Virgile] – Ambroise Firmin-Didot – Thence by descent (to 1971) – Private collection, Paris

LITERATURE: Catalogue des tableaux, esquisses, dessins, et croquis, de M. Girodet, peintre d'histoire, Paris, 11-25 April 1825 [listed as Recueil de dessins destinés à l'illustration des œuvres de Virgile] – Angela Stief, Die Aeneisillustrationen von Girodet-Trioson: künstlerische und literarische Rezeption von Vergils Epos in Frankreich um 1800, Frankfurt, 1986, the drawing mentioned p. 315, the lithograph reproduced fig. 45 – Dessiner l'Énéide, exhib. cat., Montargis, Musée Girodet, Montargis 1997, p. 44, no. 2

LITHOGRAPH: Lithographed by François-Louis Dejuinne, published as plate II in the Énéide | Suite de compositions dessinnées au trait par Girodet. Lithographiées par MM. Aubry-Lecomte, Châtillon, Counis, Dassy, De Juines, etc., Paris 1827

Girodet worked from Virgil's epic poems throughout his life. As early as 1791, he was commissioned by his teacher, Jacques-Louis David, to produce a series of illustrations to the *Aeneid* together with a fellow student, François Gérard (1770-1837). The series was published by Pierre Didot *l'ainé* in 1798.² [fig. 3] Around 1810, Girodet began work on a new series of more than 170 drawings intended either to accompany an edition of Virgil's Aeneid, or perhaps as a separate, independent volume of plates unaccompanied by text.

In a letter dated 17 February 1811 to the painter Marie-Philippe Coupin de la Couperie (1773-1851), Girodet mentioned that he had begun work on an extensive new series of illustrations to the Aeneid: Dans mes soirées et un peu pendant mes nuits, je me suis occupé de votre dessert, et je rapporterai une quinzaine de dessins nouveaux, assez arrêtés, quoiqu'ils ne soient pas entièrement terminés. J'ai plus que jamais à cœur de mettre la main à cette grande entreprise, et je compte m'occuper, de suite, à Paris, de mettre le premier livre en état d'être bientôt gravé. Il faut que je me dépêche, mon bon ami, car les années passent vite, et surtout pour moi, qui ne suis plus jeune.³

The series appears to have remained unfinished on Girodet's death in 1824 and was certainly never published. His friend, the composer and actress Amélie-Julie Simons-Candeille (1767-1834), reported that an English collector's attempt to purchase the illustrations to the *Aeneid* at the Girodet estate sale in 1825 was foiled when friends and students of Girodet, determined to safeguard his heritage and prevent the illustrations from leaving France, made a counter offer. Candeille also noted that the illustrations were purchased by Antoine-Claude Pannetier⁴ for 10,000 francs and that it was he who oversaw the production of lithographs by Girodet's students after 72 of the 182 drawings found among Girodet's effects. The entire corpus of drawings remained intact until the descendants of the publisher Pierre Didot began to sell the sheets individually at auction in Paris in 1971.

Virgil's *Aeneid* was written between 29 and 19 BC. It relates the story of the Trojan prince Aeneas who escaped by sea with other survivors of the sack of Troy and reached Italy, where he became the legendary ancestor of the Roman people. The present sheet illustrates a theme taken from the beginning of the first book. It is the scene in which Aeolus, the lord of wind and cloud, smites the rock with his spear to release the winds from the dark cavern in which, on Jupiter's orders, he had kept them enchained, and unleashes a violent storm. Juno, consumed by wrath and undying resentment towards the Trojans, wishes Aeneas and his fleet destroyed. To this end she has cunningly enticed the docile Aeolus into releasing the winds by promising him the loveliest of her nymphs, Deïopëa, as a reward. The present drawing depicts Juno presenting Aeolus with his bride while the winds hurtle from the mouth of the cave in furious flight. Frail seacraft are shown far below, battling the waves in a futile attempt to flee the approaching storm.

Virgil's account of the episode is as follows:

Smouldering, putting these questions to herself The goddess made her way to stormcloud country, Aeolia, the weather-breeding isle. Here in a vast cavern King Aeolus Rules the contending winds and moaning gales As warden of their prison. Round the walls They chafe and bluster underground. The din Makes a great mountain murmur overhead. High on a citadel enthroned, Scepter in hand, he mollifies their fury, Else they might flay the sea and sweep away Land masses and deep sky through empty air. In fear of this, Jupiter hid them away In caverns of black night. He set above them Granite of high mountains-and a king Empowered at command to rein them in Or let them go. To this king Juno now Made her petition:

"Aeolus, the father

Of gods and men decreed and fixed your power To calm the waves or make them rise in wind. The race I hate is crossing the Tuscan sea, Transporting Ilium with her household gods Beaten as they are - to Italy.

Put new fury Into your winds, and make the long ships founder! Drive them off course! Throw bodies in the sea! I have fourteen exquisite nymphs, of whom The loveliest by far, Deïopëa, Shall be your own. I'll join you two in marriage, So she will spend all future years with you, As you so well deserve, And make you father of her lovely children."

Said Aeolus:

"To settle on what you wish Is all you need to do, your majesty. I must perform it. You have given me What realm I have. By your good offices I rule with Jove's consent, and I recline Among the gods at feasts, for you appoint me Lord of wind and cloud." Spearhaft reversed, He gave the hollow mountainside a stroke, And, where a portal opened, winds in ranks, *As though drawn up for battle, hurtled through,* To blow across the earth in hurricane Over the sea, tossed up from the sea-floor, Eastwind and Southwind, then the wild Southwest With squall on squall came scudding down, Rolling high combers shoreward.

(trans. Robert Fitzgerald)⁵

Girodet also made drawings of the two episodes that immediately follow the present scene in the narrative. One of these drawings is now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the other in the Louvre. The Boston sheet depicts the dramatic situation on board one of the ships during the storm. Aeneas, wearied by fear and anguish, stretches both hands to the stars, lamenting his own fate and extolling the good fortune of the fallen Trojan heroes who died on the field of battle beneath the walls of Troy [fig. 1]. The Louvre sheet shows Neptune rising from the ocean bed. Angered by the actions of his sister, Juno, and her accomplice Aeolus, who has usurped his power over the seas, he commands the winds to withdraw and calms the waves [fig. 2].

This suite of illustrations to the *Aeneid* bears little resemblance to the illustrations Girodet had made in the 1790s for Pierre Didot's editions of Virgil (published 1798) [fig. 3]. In fact, it highlights a stylistic break with the earlier illustration designs he had produced under the aegis of David. In the new series of illustrations to the *Aeneid* begun *c*.1810, painstaking modelling and meticulous handling of detail are supplanted by highly expressive simplicity of line.

In these drawings Girodet's style of draughtsmanship is often compared to that of his English contemporary John Flaxman and reflects a trend that was discernible in England, France and Germany around 1800. The scholar Robert Rosenblum, in his noted thesis,⁶ posited that the burgeoning emphasis on outline – to the detriment of modelling and perspective – spawned works that were cleansed to the point of abstraction. Flaxman's renown and influence outside his own country rested largely on line engravings by Tommaso Piroli after Flaxman's illustrations to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Volumes of the line engravings were widely disseminated in Europe. The extraordinary concision of Flaxman's pen-and-ink line drawings has come to symbolise a form of modernity respectful of the ancients but nevertheless oriented towards the future. Their crisp, economical outlines stimulated the imagination of the viewer, who could 'complete' them in his head. Girodet knew Flaxman and was familiar with his line drawings. They were evidently in his mind when he executed the illustrations to the *Aeneid*.⁷ The figure of the wind with the outstretched right leg is indeed based on one of Flaxman's illustrations to the *Iliad* – a depiction of the funeral of Patroclus [fig. 4]. Girodet would almost certainly have known it from Piroli's engraved version which was published in London in 1805⁸.

Sidonie Lemeux-Fraitot will include the present drawing in her forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Girodet's work.

¹ Lines of the Latin text, cited from *The Latin Library* (http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/vergil/aen1.shtml).

² Silvain Bellenger, *Girodet 1767-1824*, exhib. cat., Musée du Louvre, Paris 2005, p. 437.

³ P. A. Coupin (ed.), *Œuvres posthumes de Girodet-Trioson, peintre d'histoire, suivies de sa correspondance; précédées d'une notice historique, et mises en ordre*, Paris 1829, II, pp. 309-10: During my evenings and a little of my nights I have worked on your dessert and I shall bring with me some fifteen new drawings, reasonably finished yet not fully completed. My desire to address my hand to this great undertaking is ever closer to my heart, and I intend, without delay, in Paris, to achieve a state of readiness such that the first volume may advance to an early printing. Hasten I must, my good friend, for the years pass rapidly, and in particular for my own person, since I am no longer a young man.

⁴ See Sidonie Lemeux Fraitot, Inventaire après décès de Gros et de Girodet, Paris 2002, p.196.

⁵ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York 1983; citations are from the paperback edn., 1990, Book I, pp. 5-6, the translator's lines 73-122.

⁶ Robert Rosenblum, The International Style of 1800: A Study in Linear Abstraction, New York 1956; repr. 1984, pp. 140-2.

⁷ Jay A. Clarke, 'L'Énéide', in S. Bellenger, exhib. cat., *Girodet 1767-1824*, Paris 2005, pp. 451-4.

⁸ Piroli's engraving after Flaxman's drawing was first published in 1793; the second edition was published in London in 1805.



Fig. 1: *La tempête,* black chalk on paper, c.1811, 270 x 420 mm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston [inv. 1999.7]



Fig. 2: Neptune ordonne aux vents de se retirer, black chalk on paper, c.1811, 263 x 420 mm. Musée du Louvre. Dépt. des Arts graphiques, Paris [inv. RF34729]



Fig. 3: *Lamentation sur la mort de Pallas,* black chalk, brown and grey ink, wash, heightened with white, *c*.1790-3, 215 x 165 mm. The Metropolitan Museum, New York [inv. 1996.567]

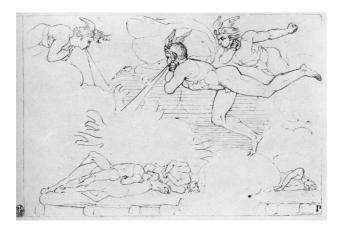
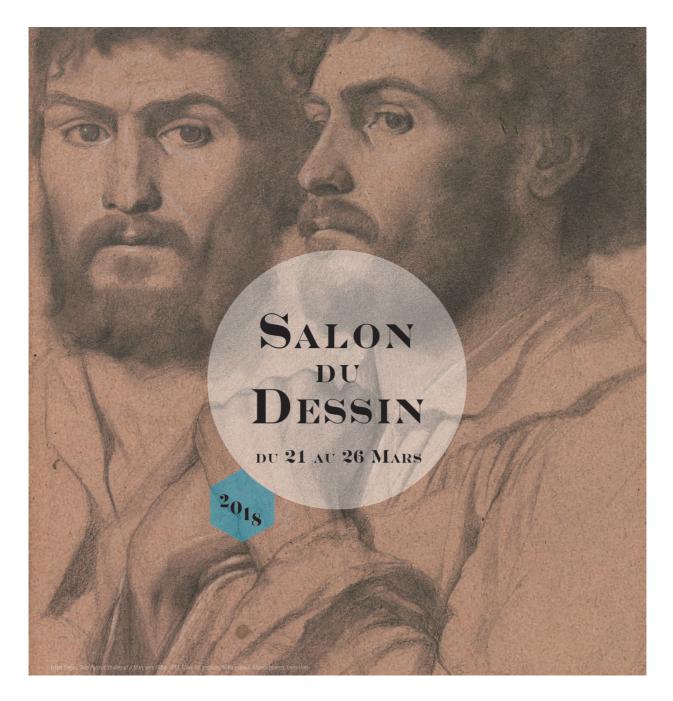


Fig. 4: John Flaxman, *The Winds fan the Flames of the Funeral Pile of Patroclus*, [Illustration for Homer's Iliad, trans. A. Pope, XXIII, 268], pen and ink, c.1793, 202 x 295 mm. SMPK, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin

NOTES



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