Fine finishes for French furniture history

An overview of the Rijksmuseum collections and the complete works of the 18th- and 19th-century cabinet-makers, Bellanger

“Silver for the courts of Russia and Spain” and “Nastalgia for the ancient regime” have three entries each, Paris 1793-1800 spans all three categories. Thus, while the selection of objects reflects the strengths of the Rijksmuseum’s collection, Baarsen provides a stylistic scaffolding of “pure” design by ingeniously intermingling the three-dimensional with printed designs. These include all eight plates of André-Charles Boulle’s Nouveau Dénouët. Four from Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier’s Grands, and further groups of four by Jean-Charles Delafosse, and from Perard and Fontaine’s Recueil de Diversions Univermes. The drawings include two superb sheets with a wall-light and a clock case by Gillain-Marie Oppenord, four blazing Chinese fantasies by Jean-Baptiste Pillement, a spectacular chandelier and a complex panel of ornament by Jean-Désiré Dagour. A door and a powerful record of an enameled marble table from the Villa Negroni (built for Stuxus V, not Vj) by Jacques-Louis David. But his earlier work is the heart of the enterprise. They constitute a sequence of revolutionary essays, some a single page, others several, supported by comprehensive illustrations, including details, marks and comparative or contextual images. The details deserve special mention; many are over life-size, to which the odd purist might object, but with a dramatic

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Jean-Désiré Dagour, design for a decorative panel, 1797-1800

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impact, making the spectator look and think as if he had seen the essence of the essays themselves, which present immovable milestones and frontiers, the Critique is now cast by a fictive ornamental scroll in a Gobelin tapestry, say, or Rouillé's use of lapis lazuli for a dragonfly's body and dragonfly patterns crop up over two centuries later, embellished on a distinctly unsettling design by Jaspé Galliard, but which by no means modifies the line of chasing on bracket clock with Rouillé marquetry is "expressive but not particularly flower" and sings a new song ("The cabinet-making is of poor quality") the motifs on a "papier" come-mode are "rather coarsely conceived up and not particularly well chased", and "scarred to a lesser degree..."

Connosseurship

This display of connosseurship, which is to clear explanations of questions of appreciation of works of art, may be rendered by repeated changes of focus."Connosseurship", as a single, multi-dimensional complement more panoramic discussions of the broader contexts of objects, is an important success but authoritative accounts of such matters as floral marquetry, the mounting of a piece will be mentioned in a letter to the editor in the December-January-June format of Florentine lacquer (including a revealing anecdote about the profit to be made by a German dealer in lacquer from Amsterdam to Paris), and the role of the poet Honoré de Balzac in the first edition of Diderot and Dominique Daguerre and Martin-Rol Ligoureux. Unusually, different materials are not mentioned in each of the compartments: hence, for example, a much closer comparison between the latest fashion lines in famous shops and the Dutch taste for Parisian objects constitutes a minor theme; in other words, classic lacquer boxes were imported in quantity. Occasionally, the reader is taken in by the sudden appearance of a charming extra of the Gobelin tapestries incorporating fictive pictures familiarly, particularly in England, from 1763, that they were cheaper to design, containing fewer figures, and so allowing, much of their surface being repeat patterns with a limited colour palette. And the cryptic "MME[MJ]/100[OC]" on an enamelled case can surely be interpreted as "Monsieur nous croit", a token of everlasting remembrance.

Intelligent, accessible

However full Baerens's 658 entries, they cannot give a wholly comprehensive picture of Parisian decorative arts over two-and-half centuries. Nonetheless such a highly intelligent and accessible survey, deriving its authority from the Parisian world of art itself, can be extremely recommended to serious scholars, who will learn much that is new and reveal in the Bibliography and Index: to scopes, who could not find a more seductive introduction to this territory; and even to sneaking to understand the appeal of Parisian luxury production is worth it. If it did not make converts. The second entry in Paris 1650-2000 describes an enameled cabinet of about 1650 already famous in the early 17th century when first noticed in the collection of the multi-millionaire Bayonne-jean Joseph Léopold de Ligne (1717-1843), at whose 1825 public sale it was purchased for 3,000 francs by the one-time master of the renowned "Marqueterie de Madrid". This information comes from the second book noted here, another docto-etrope, Sylvia, Cerf's ceramic allusions, in which Feuchère's name crops up repeatedly as an associate of Louis-Philippe Bellangé (1799-1882), the younger of two brothers involved in furniture manufacture. Correcting earlier con- servators Cerf distinguishes the firm of the elder brother, Pierre- Antipe (1778-1847), and his son, Louis-Alexandre (1795-1841), from that of Louis-Philippe, who was succeeded by his son, Alexandre-Louis (1799-

Seas with approval

A catalogue certain to become an essential reference book

SPECIALIST COLLECTING

This beautifully illustrated volume is a professional catalogue of a collection of seaside scenes of all sorts and of all dates formed over the past 25 years or so by David Hume, who is well known to many for his single-minded determination to collect what is either histor- iologically interesting or of conspicuous aesthetic appeal. To do the collection justice he has drawn upon the services of John Chevrolet, former curator of the Medieval and Later Antiquities at the British Museum, and of Julia Clarke and John Coleman, both of Sotheby's. Yet the emphasis is on the delightful and personal overview on the subject, although it is clear that he also abounded in some of the earliest seals in the collection such as those of the 14th and 15th century, particularly that made by William de Lawing in the first half of the 14th century. The main catalogue and the introduction are the work of the indefatigable Julia Clarke. In each of the 145 entries the seals are elegantly described, their inscriptions quoted in full, and translated where necessary, and any iconography explored. Here are seals of the British royal family, of the government, of innumerable members of the aristocracy, of various members of the clergy, of civil institutions such as towns, town and ports, of towns or individuals in such far flung colonies or dominions as the British Virgin Islands, Canada, or Australia. As a result the seals are constructed from gold, semi-precious stones, silver, ivory, wood, or brass, largely depending on the wealth or rank of the original user. One silver seal marked by Thomas Wightman, London 1845, gives John Coleman the opportunity of exploring the career of this little known silversmith. Online traces his life from that of a silversmith's apprentice to the Hereford, Shropshire, and later, Regent Street, London, to the House of Correction in Clerkenwell, followed by conviction for theft, and finally transportation to Tasmania for pick-pocking. There he set up as a tinsmith and maker, before apparently committing suicide in 1869. Any collector in the field would be well advised to have this catalogue on their shelves. Not only is it very appealing, it is text full of fascinating pieces of information that are hard to come by. Charles Twemley

Our reviewers this month

- Alexander Adams is a British writer and publisher, and his most recent book of poems and drawings, The Cranes of Berlin, was published this year by Fitzcarraldo Editions.
- Stephen Clarke is a writer and intellectual, and his latest book, "The Emperor's New Clothes", was published by Bloomsbury in 2023.
- Thomas Twemlow is a British writer and publisher, and his most recent book, "The Cranes of Berlin", was published by Fitzcarraldo Editions.
- David Bellingham is the programme director for the MA in art business at Sotheby's Institute of Art, London.
- Andreas Gomrainer is the director of the art history programme at the SWFF, Lower Austria. He has written extensively about Paul Troug and the Vienna painting around 1900, and curates the exhibition, "Tiker, Blau und keine Kunst" (The Blue and No Art) at the Albertina, Vienna, and Altenburg, Lower Austria, in 2012.
- Peter Howell taught for 35 years in the Department of Classics, Bedford and Royal Holloway, where he also chaired the Victorian Society from 1897 to 1997. His most recent book was Mortal Ancients in Action (Carnegie, 2012), and he is cur- rently writing a book on the triumphant arch.
- Amélie Kahane is a professor emeritus of English and Slavic Studies at Colombia University. Her areas of expertise include the cultural and political history of the central Middle East (1000-1600 BC), especially the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Seleucid rule. Her most recent book is The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources (from the Achaemenid History Project). He is now working on the Persian Empire.
- Emanuele Rettelli is a graduate student at the University of Naples and a specialist in classical literature and literature. His most recent work is Projecting Empires: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid History Project. He is now working on the Persian Empire.
- Simon Sweeney is an independent art critic of The Art Newspaper. He has written for the Observer and has worked on curatorial projects for BBC arts and culture.
- Bernard Schiff is an art critic of Der Spiegel. He is interested in the politics of art and culture in the first half of the 20th century, especially in Germany and the Soviet Union. In September, he will have a special curatorial project for the Forschungsstelle "Entwurf der Zukunft", "Departent Art" research institute at Berlin Free University, he gave the keynote lecture on the perception of "Departent Art" in post-war Germany.
- Peter Seward is the director of the Center for International Cultural Policy Education at the University of Kent. His publications deal with many aspects of classical art, particularly sculpture, and include "The Aesthetic of the Statue" (Cambridge University Press, 2008).