



Nicolas Le Sueur & Paul Ponce Antoine Robert-de-seri, The Assumption Of The Virgin



450 EUR

Signature : NICOLAS LE SUEUR & PAUL PONCE
ANTOINE ROBERT-DE-SERI

Period : 18th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Paper

Length : 35 cm

Height : 38 cm

Description

NICOLAS LE SUEUR & PAUL PONCE
ANTOINE ROBERT-DE-SERITHE
ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN(from the
Crozat Collection)France, c. 1729-1740Aquatint
and etching printed in brown and green, imitating
a chiaroscuro woodcutSheet: 25 × 22.5 cm / 9.8 ×
8.8 inwith mount: 38 × 35 cm / 15 × 13.8
inLower margin trimmed, otherwise in very good
condition for the period.PROVENANCE- Private
collection, FranceThis refined and atmospheric
print, executed in an early and technically
ambitious combination of aquatint and etching
designed to imitate the effects of a chiaroscuro
woodcut, belongs to the celebrated series
commissioned by the French collector and banker
Pierre Crozat between 1729 and 1742. Although
the lower margin of the present impression has

Dealer

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been trimmed--removing the original inscriptions--the composition is a well-documented plate from the *Recueil d'estampes d'après les plus beaux tableaux et d'après les plus beaux desseins qui sont en France*, the monumental project that sought to reproduce the finest works held in the royal collections, in the Palais-Royal, and in Crozat's own cabinet. The technique deliberately evokes the great Renaissance and Baroque tradition of chiaroscuro printing, first formulated in Venice in the early sixteenth century. The method--developed by Ugo da Carpi and later perfected by Andrea Andreani, Antonio da Trento, Domenico Beccafumi and Antonio Maria Zanetti--combined several woodblocks printed in different tonalities to create sheets that appeared "painted with a brush," as da Carpi described them. The intention was not merely to reproduce light and shadow but to imitate the tonal washes and local colour of Venetian draughtsmanship. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term chiaroscuro had expanded to encompass a wide variety of multi-plate or multi-block tonal prints. France, in particular, embraced and transformed the technique, integrating it into an increasingly sophisticated graphic culture. French printmakers were fascinated by the possibility of reproducing wash drawings, and the chiaroscuro tradition became an essential foundation for the development of aquatint, the new medium adopted here. It was precisely this fertile intersection of tradition and innovation that attracted Pierre Crozat, one of the most discerning patrons of early eighteenth-century France. His ambitious *Recueil* was entrusted to leading printmakers, including Nicolas Le Sueur and Paul Ponce Antoine Robert-de-Seri, who adapted their techniques depending on the original artwork being reproduced. Engravings were used for paintings, etchings for line drawings, while for wash drawings printers combined etching with successive tonal printings. By the time of the second edition

(1763), many colour woodcuts were replaced with aquatints--the brand-new technique used in the present sheet--precisely because aquatint offered a subtler, more fluid imitation of wash. The present impression therefore stands at a historical moment when the older Venetian chiaroscuro tradition converged with the newly emergent French tonal engraving. The subject, the Assumption of the Virgin, is taken from a drawing by the Roman painter Giuseppe Passeri (1654-1714), a prominent figure of the late Roman Baroque. The swirling ascent of the Virgin on banks of cloud, carried by angels and bathed in radiant light, is rendered with exceptional grace in this print. The combination of etched line and coloured aquatint creates a luminous, painterly surface--one of the hallmarks of Crozat's most ambitious plates. Although the original printed inscription--naming Passeri, Robert-de-Seri and Le Sueur--has been trimmed in this impression, the composition is fully identifiable through surviving uncut examples. The loss of the lower margin does not diminish the artistic value of the present sheet; on the contrary, the clarity of the printing and the exceptional preservation of the tonal passages make it a distinguished and representative example of early eighteenth-century French colour printmaking. This impression, despite its trimmed inscription, remains a noteworthy witness to a crucial period in the history of European printmaking: a moment when the Venetian tradition of chiaroscuro, the newly perfected technique of aquatint, and the intellectual ambitions of Pierre Crozat converged to create some of the most refined and experimental colour prints of the eighteenth century.