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La Réunion
Des Plus Célebres
Monuments Antiques
De La France

WOODEN CROSS, MEXICO

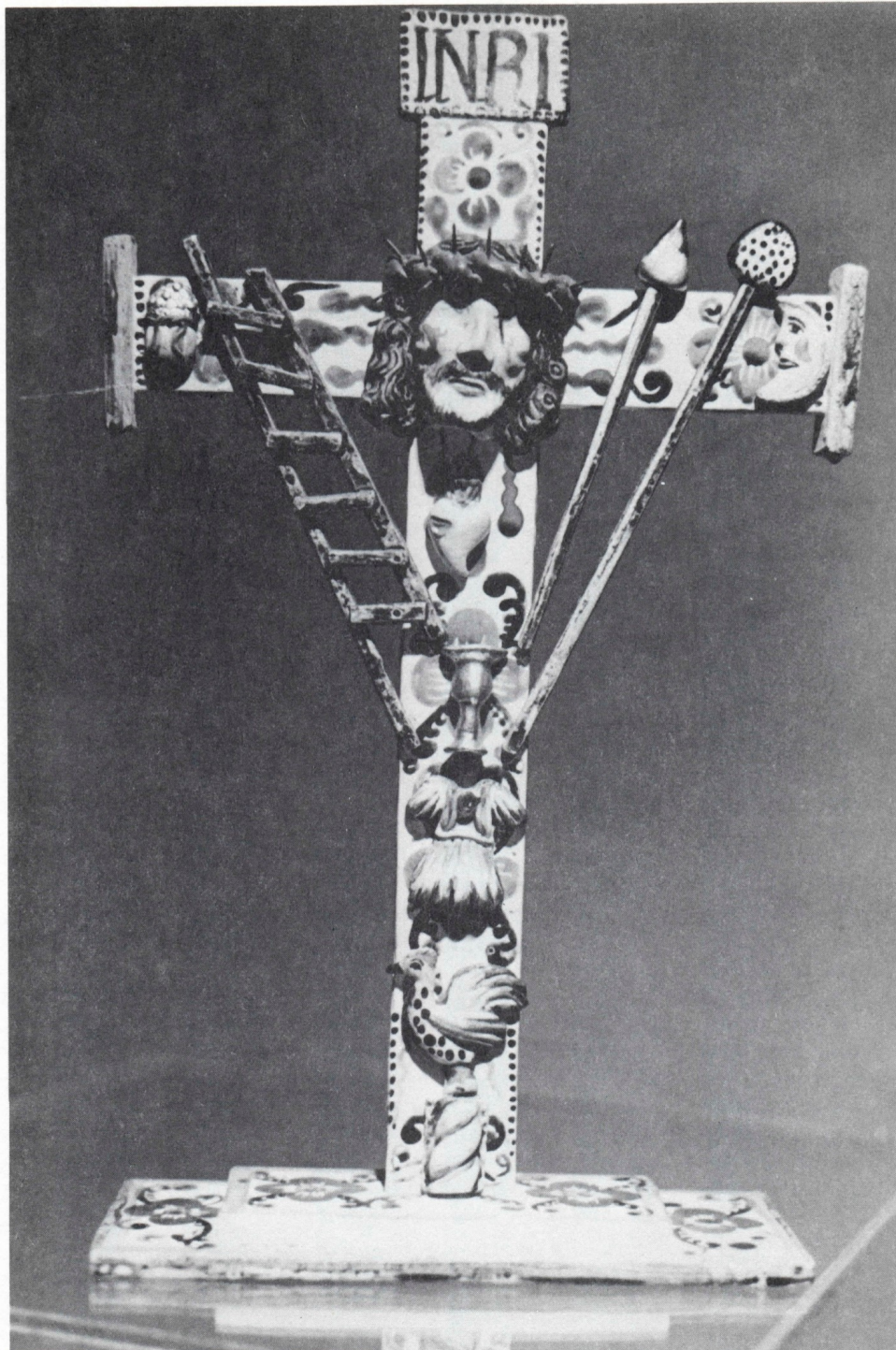
Mildred Monteverde

In 1977 the University Art Collection at Arizona State University received from Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Adler a gift that included a small decorated wooden cross. The cross is known to be Mexican, a type often considered "folk art," and probably was intended for use in a private devotional context. It would have been located in a simple domestic shrine, much in the way it is now displayed in the Matthews Center gallery.

No details more specifically indicating the Mexican origins of the cross have been documented.¹ The materials and construction, wood base and raised plaster decorations painted with hardware-store enamel, give little clue to provenience. And although a florid signature appears on the back of the cross in the green paint of the decoration probably identifying the artisan-maker, no reference to location of manufacture is evident. Perhaps an iconographic study will reveal information about origins of the cross not otherwise apparent.

Most of the brightly painted figures scattered across the front of the cross are familiar symbols of the Passion of Christ.² There is the *arma cristi*, the lance, sponge, ladder and INRI referring to the crucifixion. The coat relates to the Roman soldiers gambling at the foot of the cross for the robe of Christ. The pillar refers to the flagellation, the cock to Peter's denial and the bag of coins to the betrayal of Judas. The sun and moon are ancient crucifixion symbols indicating the sorrow of all creation at the death of Christ; usually they are shown together, on this cross only the moon appears.

Other figures, a chalice with wafer, the portrait of Christ and a bleeding heart, either are not symbols of the passion or are modifications of passion symbolism. The chalice or eucharistic vessel with the wafer is not strictly a passion symbol. But it does occur with passion symbolism in sixteenth century paintings of *The Mass of St. Gregory* in at least two conventual buildings in central Mexico.³ *The Mass of St. Gregory* was a favorite theme of early Franciscans during the conversion of Mexico.⁴ It was this scene that provided the imagery for large stone crosses carved by Indians under the direction of missionizing friars for sixteenth century mission churches.⁵



Wooden Cross, Mexico. University Art Collection, Arizona State University. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Adler, 16½ x 10½ inches, paint on plaster and wood.

The chalice with wafer is the first indication of sources for the wood cross in the Matthews Center gallery. The occurrence of the chalice with wafer and the same other symbols found first in the paintings of the *Mass of St. Gregory*, then on the early decorated stone crosses and finally on the folk cross suggests that sixteenth century images are prototypes for the modern wood cross.

The face of Christ that appears at the juncture of the arms and shaft of the wood cross is a modification of passion symbolism. This representation of Christ with crown of thorns is taken from the *sudarium* or Veronica veil. The *sudarium* is a passion symbol relating to the mystic transference of the image of Christ's face to the veil with which Veronica wiped the brow of Christ on the way to Golgotha. But on the wood cross the veil is not shown and instead the face of Christ projects from the crossing. Not surprisingly, this is the important image, having considerably more realistic definition than the other figures. The three-dimensional head in its location between the arms anthropomorphizes the cross.

It is this unique modification of passion symbolism that leads to specific sources for the wood cross. There is a particular type of large stone sixteenth century cross carved for Augustinian mission churches which has the portrait of Christ from the Veronica veil at the crossing⁶

The figure remaining to be considered on the wood cross indicates further Augustinian connections. It is the only image that bears no relationship to the Passion of Christ: the bleeding heart, symbol of the Augustinian order.

The location of the heart on the shaft of the cross intensifies the impression of the cross as a living 'body.' This effect was clearly intended on the early Augustinian crosses, and although the image of the bleeding heart was never shown on the stone crosses, sixteenth century carvers used other devices to suggest a 'crucified' cross. They pierced the arms and shaft with nails or showed copiously bleeding wounds.

These stone crosses are found in greatest numbers in the Indian communities of Augustinian missionizing around and in Mexico City. Some remain in their original location in front of the mission churches, some have been moved to cemeteries, town plazas or to the entrance of towns. Highly visible, they have been seen beribboned and strewn with flowers, featured as a kind of shrine when used as a part of religious processions.⁷

A favored religious image is a likely source for folk art and given the close resemblance between the wood and stone crosses it is probable that the contemporary wood cross was modeled directly after the sixteenth century crosses. Thus it is likely the wood cross was made in the area where the stone crosses are located, that is, in the vicinity of Mexico City.

While establishing the general provenance of the cross may be of some small use to scholars attempting to clarify the Mexican popular art picture, the particular value of this study is in validating the link between sixteenth century painting and cross iconography. There has been disagreement as to sources for the stone crosses. This modest wood cross provides, through its unique modification of passion symbolism, additional evidence that the symbolic system of representation on the stone crosses was derived from sixteenth century wall paintings of *The Mass of St. Gregory* and not from wood crosses brought into Mexico by Europeans.

FOOTNOTES

¹Popular art is produced in many areas of Mexico; often the place of production is uncertain.

²A pattern of painted florals behind the raised figures could be remnants of Pre-Columbian symbolism (where flowers symbolized the "precious" or sacrificial blood). Today the Yaqui Indians of Sonora - Arizona show crimson rosettes of ribbon, wool or paper to indicate the "sangre de cristo" in their Easter Passion plays.

³At Tepeapulco and Cholula. The Tepeapulco mural is illustrated in George Kubler's *Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven, 1948), II, Fig. 399; the Cholula mural by Manuel Toussaint in *Arte Colonial en Mexico* (Mexico City, 1948), Fig. 32.

⁴Mildred Monteverde, "Iconography of 16th Century Atrio Crosses" *Sociedad Mexicana de Antropologia, XII mesa redonda*, (Mexico City, 1975), pp. 161-166.

⁵*Ibid.* Sources for the passion symbolism on sixteenth century stone crosses were thought to be portable crosses brought to Mexico by the Spaniards; see Jose Moreno Villa, *Lo Mexicano en las artes plasticas* (Mexico City, 1948), pp. 24-28.

⁶*Ibid.* The face at the crossing distinguishes the Augustinian from Franciscan crosses. Franciscans avoided this "anthropomorphization" and showed only the crown of thorns at the crossing.

⁷The author has seen these processions and has photographed at least three flower-laden crosses.

LE PETIT TABLIER

Rosalind Robinson

Were it not for his friendship with the writer-critic, Charles Baudelaire, little would be known of the life or work of Constantin Guys. The former's search for an artist who would represent his ideal of "the painter of modern life" resulted in his selection of Guys as the one who would embody the spirit of contemporary life in mid-nineteenth century France. Baudelaire's subsequent essay on Guys, published in *Le Figaro* in 1863, brought this artist to the attention of the public. Unlike that of most of his contemporaries, Guys' subject matter involved neither classical inspiration nor the solace of religion. He was interested in capturing life as it happened, almost in the sense of a modern photographer.

Guys' life was one filled with travel and adventure. Born into an upper-middle class family in Flessingue, Holland in 1802, he began his wanderings at the age of eighteen, when he fought with Byron in the Greek wars, then served as a Dragoon in the French army. When at age thirty-eight he left the army, he traveled through Spain, Italy, Bulgaria, Egypt, and Algeria, making sketches. Thus he was not unfamiliar with the exotic cultures he was to encounter as correspondent for the *Illustrated London News* during the Crimean War from 1854-1856. It was at this time as well that photography was coming into use as a journalistic medium, so Guys' desire to record historical events in a moment was not too surprising. However, unlike some of his colleagues, Guys tended to idealize what he saw. His emphasis lay more on the pomp and circumstance of military ritual than on the horrors of war's destruction which were the preoccupation of contemporary photographers.

Upon returning to London after the war, Guys continued his attempt to reproduce modern life in his drawings and water colors, but at this time his subject matter became that of the elegant upper classes of Paris. Like his champion, Baudelaire, Guys took pleasure in glorifying the "dandy," as well as his equally well-dressed female counterpart. Ladies were depicted in their carriages, surrounded by dapper gentlemen, with similarly elegant horses prancing spiritedly alongside. As in the wartime drawings,



Constantin Guys, *Le Petit Tablier*, (The Little Apron). c. 1830-1835. Pencil with Watercolor Wash, 26.67 x 17.78 cm., unsigned, inexpensive paper, Phoenix Art Museum 60-29.

costume was all-important to the artist. Indeed, it is only by way of current fashions that it is at all possible to date the *oeuvre* of Guys, for he neither signed nor dated his drawings. Even his friend Baudelaire was only allowed to refer to him in print by the initials, M.G. (Monsieur Guys).

The chronology of Guys' works is most readily perceived through his depictions of the modes and coiffures of his own designs in relation to those of the period. I am careful here to use the word chronology rather than evolution, because I don't think that stylistic changes are that significant in Guys' works. His subject matter varies more from decade to decade; he does not deviate much within a given period. He portrays men, women, horses, and war in similar fashion, showing little developmental change until the late 1850's when his subject matter turned from that of the upper classes to the Paris *demi-monde*. It is from this time on that one can see differences in style, but no longer in subject matter. For the rest of his life, Guys would depict the gradual decadence of women, both in their character and in their costume.

In an article in the *Gazette de Beaux Arts*, July, 1956, entitled "La Vie de Guys et la Chronologie de son Oeuvre," Jamar Rolin-Luce attempts to divide Guys' works into five periods according to men's and women's styles of dress: 1830-35, 1840-50, 1850-60, 1860-70, and after 1870. It is by his system that I have assigned a date to the Phoenix Art Museum drawing. I would suggest retitling the work *Grisette*; since I have been able to date it approximately, it seems more logical to relate the name to the specific subject matter rather than referring to the apron worn by Guys' women over a number of years.

I have placed this drawing in the 1830-35 period, first according to the hairstyle which was not worn after 1835. It, along with the costume, matches the one in a drawing to which Rolin-Luce has attributed the same date. In his earlier drawings, as exemplified by this one, Guys portrayed the "grisette," the working girl of Paris whose youthful spirit and beauty enlivened the streets of that city. As here, she is usually seen wearing a little apron, her hands thrust in its pockets. Her face is quite impersonal, a quality which pervades Guys' works, regardless of social class. During this phase, her skirt comes to her ankles, though her shoulders are bared and she wears a knotted neck scarf which emphasizes the whiteness of her skin. Her hair is combed into three bunches, the center one covered up by a little beribboned hat placed toward the front of her head.

After the Crimean War, along with the depiction of high society and eventually overtaking it as subject matter, the *demi-monde* or low life of Paris occupied Guys' attention. By 1860 the scene had changed to that of the cabarets and bordellos. The little "grisettes" were no longer in evidence, but had been replaced by the inhabitants of these lascivious places. The girls were vulgarly bejeweled, with accompanying decadence in dress, their uplifted skirts showing their defiance of polite society. The idealization gradually disappeared and in his final phase, the lively colors, shimmering dresses, and beautiful jewelry faded altogether. Guys seemed intent on removing all elements which would detract from his depiction of human misery.

It is not difficult to see the germ of Guys' later work in the Phoenix Art Museum drawing. One wonders, however, what caused this artist who at one time romanticized war, and depicted the gracious life of the top strata of society, to concentrate his later years on developing his subject matter in a much less pleasant direction.

There are several possible answers to this question. We are aware of his long association with Nadar, an extraordinary man who was at different times and sometimes simultaneously: a journalist, a balloonist, a draughtsman, a political agitator, and a celebrated photographer. Such a man would be ever conscious of the changing face of reality. Or did Guys fall under the spell of late nineteenth century *mal-du-siècle*, the feeling of ennui with the monotony of life? Perhaps his association with Byron early in life had implanted such ideas. Perhaps the change was due to his association with

Baudelaire, a man full of fears and insecurities, whose view of love became that of lust and its attendant pleasure in doing evil. Both men were probably attempting to revolt against the conventional sort of love and morality practiced by contemporary bourgeois society, a society whose ordered security was also repugnant to the Impressionists.

For whatever reasons, Guys continued in his later vein until the end of his life. In 1885, he delivered a number of his unsigned drawings to the Musée Carnavalet in Paris where an astute guard recognized them and was thus able to assure their preservation.

Guys' importance as an artist lies not so much in the excellence of his style, but rather as being the first to capture the "frozen moment" so essential to the Impressionists. A few of his drawings are said to have influenced Manet, but of even more significance is Guys' preoccupation with the low life which opened up the way to the subject matter dealt with so effectively by Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. Like Baudelaire then, Guys was a transitional figure between the Romantics and the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. Although he never attained the prominence of those who benefitted from his foundations, their debt to him should not be overlooked.

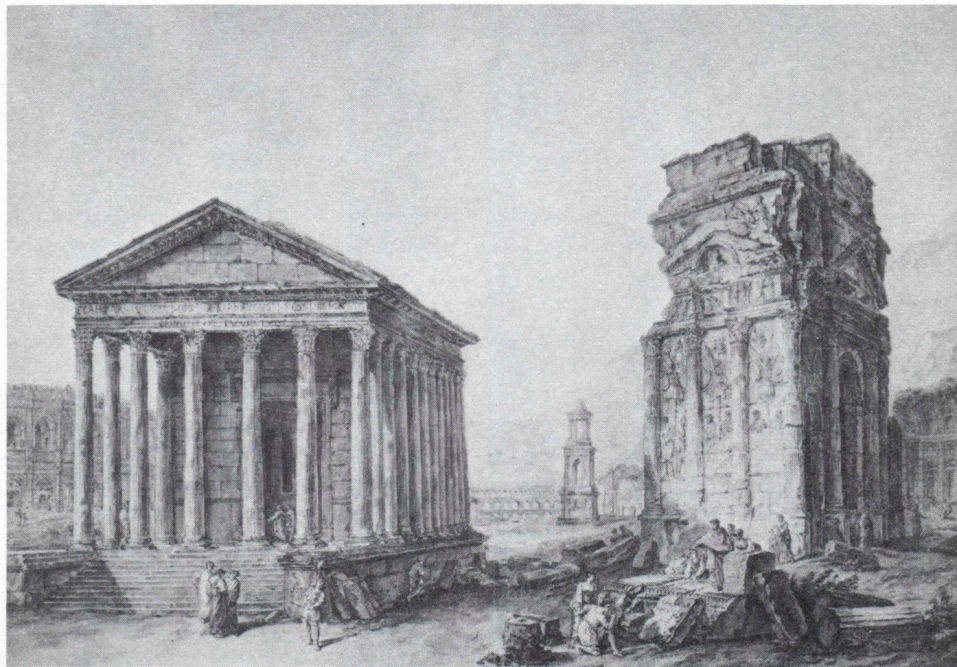
LA
RÉUNION
DES
PLUS CÉLÈBRES
MONUMENTS ANTIQUES
DE LA FRANCE

Vicki C. Wright

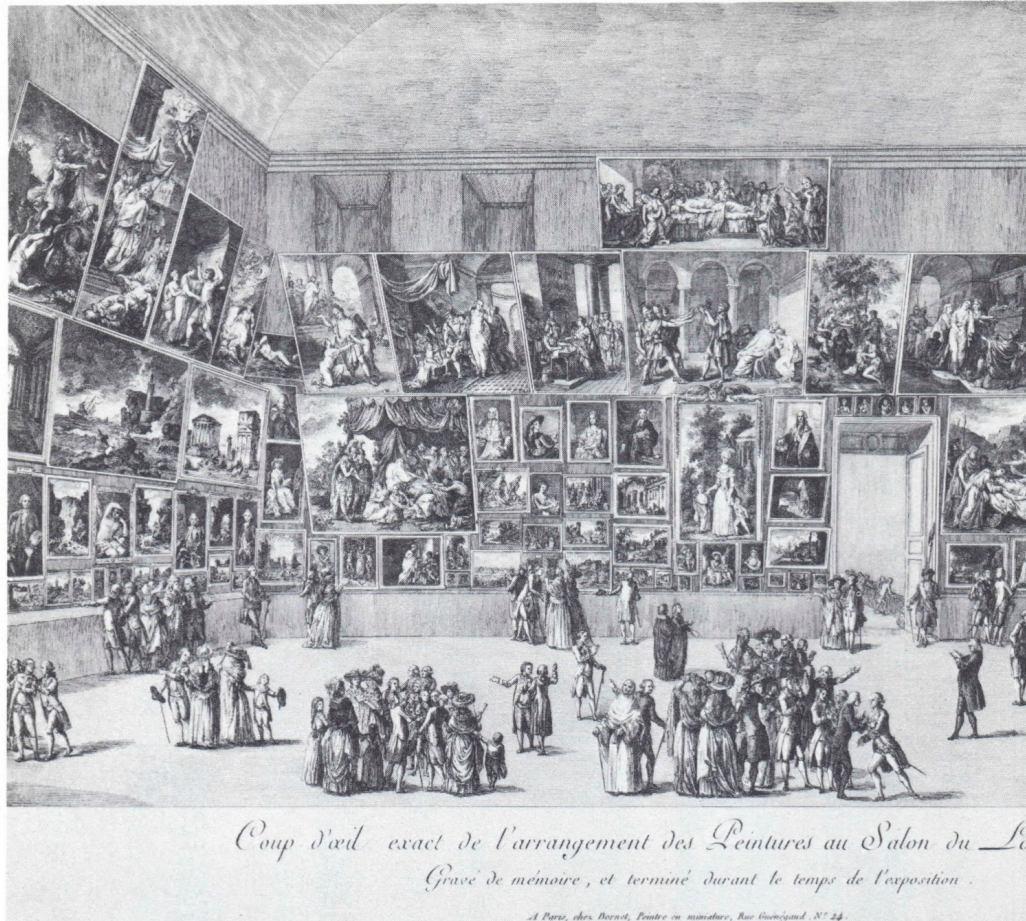
A drawing by Hubert Robert in the collection of the Phoenix Art Museum (fig. 1), traditionally known as *La Maison Carrée et Monuments Antiques*, has largely eluded the attention of Robert scholars.¹ The drawing, executed in pen and ink with watercolor wash, is too precise and detailed to be classified as a sketch; rather, the style and technique of this drawing suggest its function as an advanced preparatory study for an oil painting. Indeed, the Phoenix Art Museum drawing can now be identified as a fully developed study for *La Réunion des Plus Célèbres Monuments Antiques de la France* in the collection of the Pavlovsk Palace Museum in Leningrad, Russia.²

Hubert Robert (1735-1808), the French painter, decorator and garden designer, is noted for his romantic depictions of the architectural relics of Classical antiquity. Known by his contemporaries as "Robert des Ruines," he developed an aptitude for the artistic genre of ruins during an eleven-year sojourn in Italy, where he executed a vast number of sketches of the crumbling architectural monuments of the ancient Roman Empire. As a student at the French Academy in Rome, Robert was strongly influenced by the work of Pannini and of Piranesi. In fact, he collected works by these Italian masters throughout the rest of his life, believing them to be largely responsible for his own success as a painter of ruins.³ Returning to Paris in 1765, Robert enjoyed immediate success, in both amateur and professional circles. He became a member of the Academy in 1766 and exhibited in the Salons for the following thirty years.

With the increasing 18th-century interest in the ruin as an element of the picturesque landscape, artists realized, in the third quarter of the century, that France itself was a wealthy source of antique ruins dating from the Imperial Roman era. So it was that, in 1783, Robert embarked on a journey through Provence in southern France, sketching and recording each of the monuments he encountered. Between 1783 and 1787, the artist utilized these sketches as the basis for a number of paintings depicting these antiquities of France. Robert's renderings of these structures are generally faithful to architectural detail, although he sometimes juxtaposed them within a single composi-



1 Hubert Robert, *La Réunion Des Plus Célèbres Monuments Antiques De La France*.
Accession number 62-10, 38.2 x 54.2 cm., pen and ink with watercolor wash on paper.



2 Pietro Antonio Martini, *The Exhibition at the Louvre, 1785*. (Photograph courtesy of Prints Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations).

tion, with no regard for topographical accuracy. This can be seen in Robert's undated drawing in the collection of the Phoenix Art Museum. The antique Roman structures which have been grouped together to form this lyrical architectural landscape can be identified as monuments from various locations in southern France. They are, from left to right, the Amphitheater and the Maison Carrée, both in Nîmes, the Pont du Gard, located just outside Nîmes, the Monument and Triumphal Arch of St. Rémy, the Triumphal Arch of Orange, and the Temple of Diana in Nîmes.

In 1782, the Grand Duc Paul Petrovitch of Russia, the son of Catherine the Great and later Tsar Paul I, commissioned from Robert four large decorative panels to be hung in his royal home. The artist executed these works, but, before sending them to Russia, he exhibited two of them in the 1785 Salon of the Louvre. The *Livret* of the Salon lists one of these works as *La Réunion des Plus Célèbres Monumens* (sic) *Antiques de la France* and goes on to describe the content of this *Réunion* as the Arena and Maison Carrée in Nîmes, the Pont du Gard, the Triumphal Arch and Monument of St. Rémy, and the Triumphal Arch of Orange.⁴ This entry has, in fact, described the monuments depicted in the Phoenix Art Museum drawing, in the correct order, from left to right.



3 P.A. Martini, *The Exhibition at the Louvre, 1785*. (detail)

The relationship between the Phoenix drawing and the painting in Russia can be further substantiated by turning to an engraving of the 1785 Salon of the Louvre by P.A. Martini (fig. 2). A work illustrated in this engraving, located near the left corner of the exhibition hall and in the second row from the top, appears to be the painting described in the *Livret* entry. In subject matter and composition, its similarity to the drawing in the Phoenix Art Museum is evident.

Writing in the *Burlington Magazine* in November 1972, M.R. Michel has described the painting in Russia as “having as subject matter the Maison Carrée, the Arc de Triomphe at Orange, and in the background, the St. Rémy antiquities and the Pont du Gard.”⁵ Her description has provided a more complete visual conception of the painting in Russia, by placing the monuments in their correct spatial relationships. The differentiation between foreground and background elements verifies the identification of the work illustrated in Martini’s engraving and further supports the connection of the Phoenix drawing to the painting in the Pavlovsk Palace Museum.

The engraving by Martini and the literary descriptions of Robert’s painting in Russia provide sufficient evidence of the close relationship between the drawing and the

painting. The tight and fairly meticulous execution of the drawing does indeed indicate its role as an advanced study for the painting. The drawing, then, may be more suitably entitled *La Réunion des Plus Célèbres Monuments Antiques de la France*, in accordance with the title of the painting. The identification of the drawing as a preparatory study helps to establish its date of execution between 1783, when Robert first recorded the antiquities of Provence, and 1785, when the *Réunion* painting was exhibited at the Salon of the Louvre. Certainly, the connection between the drawing in the Phoenix Art Museum and the painting in the Pavlovsk Palace Museum establishes the drawing as a work of major significance for the study of the *oeuvre* of Hubert Robert.

FOOTNOTES

¹The content of this article is based on research conducted for a seminar at Arizona State University, under the direction of Professor Anthony Lacy Gully. I wish to express my gratitude both to Professor Gully and to Professor Hugh T. Broadley, who brought to my attention P.A. Martini's engraving of the Salon of 1785.

²At the time of publication, a reproduction of this painting in the Pavlovsk Palace Museum was unavailable for study. Though the painting, *La Réunion des Plus Célèbres Monuments Antiques de la France*, has been cited in literary references, it appears to be unreproduced. However, a relationship between the Phoenix Art Museum drawing and the painting in Russia can be developed with the aid of an engraving by P.A. Martini and descriptions of the painting found in literary sources.

³Alexandre Paillet's catalogue of the sale of Robert's *cabinet*, held on April 5, 1809, reproduced in C. Gabillot, *Hubert Robert et son Temps* (Paris, 1895), pp. 258-59.

⁴"Salon de 1785," *Collection des Livrets des Anciennes Expositions*, XXXIII (Paris, 1870), p. 22.

⁵M.R. Michel, "L'Art du Dix-huitième Siècle. A Taste for Classical Antiquity in Town Planning Projects: Two Aspects of the Art of Hubert Robert," *Burlington Magazine*, CXIV (November, 1972), supp. p. iv.

