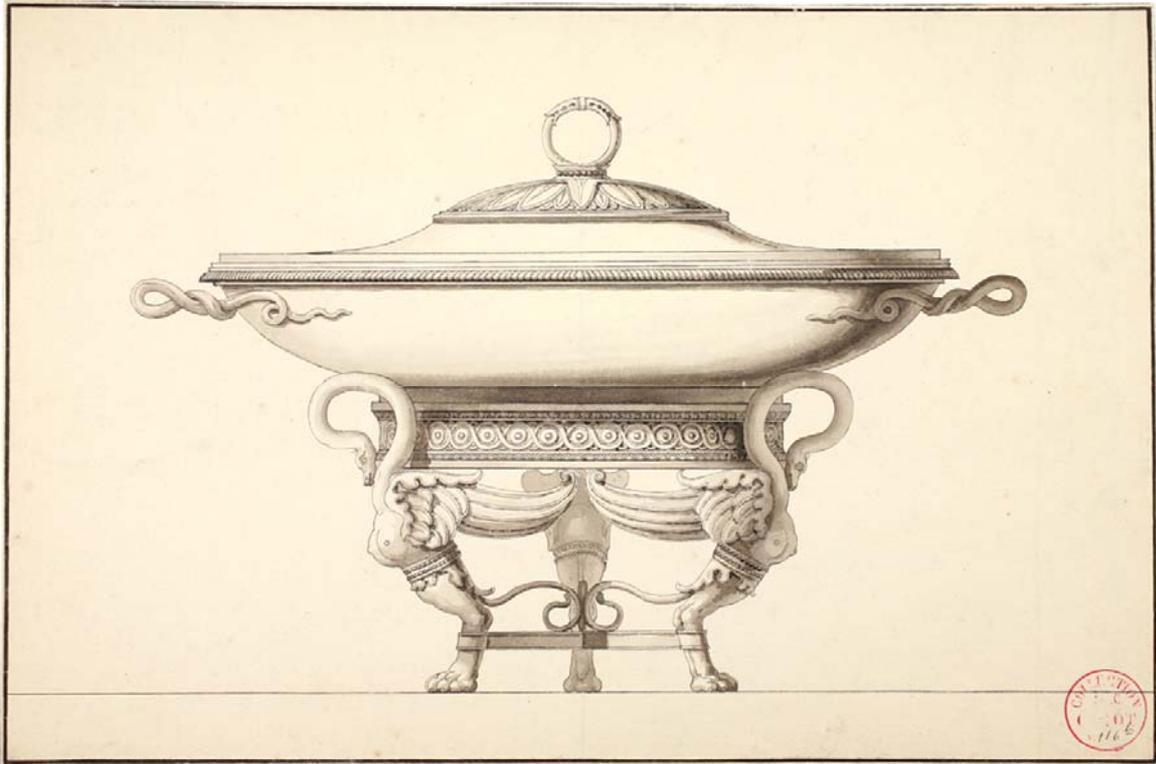


LE CLAIRE

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JEAN-GUILLAUME MOITTE

1746 - Paris - 1810

- a. *An Empire style vegetable dish and cover on three paw feet, finished with attaches with swans' neck, the plain body, the handles as snakes, the cover with a final as a ring on a foliage terrace*
- b. *An Empire style vegetable dish and cover on three paw feet, finished with lions' heads, the plain body, the handles as snakes, the covers with a final as double snakes on foliage terrace*

Pen, black ink, with black and grey wash. Two framing lines in black ink.

282 x 425 and 243 x 420 mm

PROVENANCE: Henri Auguste - J. B. C. Odiot and Maison Odiot, acquired in 1810. Bearing the Odiot stamp in red with the numbering *116 bis* and *119* – With Galerie Fischer-Kiener, Paris – Adrien Ward-Jackson, London – Private collection

The son of an engraver and pupil of the sculptors J.-B. Pigalle and J.-B. Lemoyne, Moitte won the Academy's first prize for sculpture in 1768. The study of antique sculpture during his stay in Rome [1771-3] remained the decisive source for his art throughout his life. A friend of Jacques-Louis David and a committed participant in artistic enterprises during the Revolution and the Empire, Moitte had a successful career, receiving official commissions during the last decade of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

Following his return to Paris in 1773 Moitte is said to have executed *plus de mille dessins de ce genre*¹ for the celebrated goldsmith Henri Auguste.² Silbergerät nach Entwürfen Moittes zählten am Ende des Ancien Regime zu den exquisitesten Luxusgütern, deren Erwerb sich nur die reichsten Fürsten in Europa leisten konnten³. None of the known designs like the present two is dated but a related

¹ J. Lebreton, *Notice historique sur la vie et les ouvrages de Moitte*, Paris 1812, p. 30.

² Henri Auguste (1759 – 1816) was a leading Parisian gold- and silversmith, working in the neoclassical style. He became one of the leading designers of Empire style in *orfèverie*, a rival of Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot and Martin-Guillaume Biennais. He was the only son of the royal goldsmith Robert-Joseph Auguste (1723 – 1805), whose workshop he assumed in 1784–85. He continued to receive official patronage under Louis XVI from 1784 onwards and also from Napoleon, as well as from the City of Paris, which commissioned a vast silver service in 1804, in connection with the coronation of Napoleon; of the service that comprised 425 pieces, most were melted down under Charles X; of the remainder, 24 pieces are exhibited in the Salle à manger, Château de Malmaison. Among his private patrons was William Beckford. Auguste received a gold medal in the 3rd Exposition d'industrie, Paris, 1802. He was declared bankrupt in 1806, however, and, though he was given a period of time in which to order his affairs, was caught at Dieppe in 1809 with 94 packing cases, containing some silver, scientific instruments, and furniture attempting to flee to England and was adjudged a fraudulent bankrupt. He fled successfully to England in 1809. In 1810 his rival Odiot acquired a number of drawings from his workshop, including one for a wine cooler from the City of Paris banquet service by Moitte and bearing Odiot's collection mark, now at the J. Paul Getty Museum. He died in Jamaica in 1816.

³ With the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789 Moitte went through a period of financial losses caused by destruction of some of his most notable works such as the sculptural reliefs of 1792 in the pediment of the Pantheon and the reliefs on Ledoux's barrières of 1787-9. Darüber hinaus brachte die Revolution ihn auch um die regelmäßigen

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drawing of silverware signed by Moitte and dated 'l'an trois' (22 September 1794 - 22 September 1795) is in the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris⁴ suggesting his designs for Auguste were executed around the same time. Today, the scholars widely accept the attribution to Moitte.⁵ Some of these designs were for particular commissions such as those for William Beckford of Fonthill Abbey and Prince Vladimir Galitzin. Other designs would have been adapted at a later date. It is evident that Moitte's classically inspired drawings contributed much to the development of the Empire style in metalwork in which Auguste's *œuvre* played an important role.

Despite Auguste's success his unreliability and unorthodox business operations as well as his 'dissipations' would ultimately lead to his bankruptcy in 1810. It was then that the vast majority of his studio was acquired by his rival Jean-Baptiste Odiot who continued to realise Moitte's designs for the Emperor Napoleon and his family.⁶ To this day Maison Odiot remains one of France's finest silversmiths and the influence of the Empire style spearheaded by Moitte and Auguste is still reflected in the pieces that they design and produce.

Einnahmen von 4.000 Livres, die er sich bei dem Hofbildhauer Henri Auguste (s. a.) als Designer von Silbergerät erwarb. Gisela Gramaccini, *Jean-Guillaume Moitte (1746 – 1810) Leben und Werk*, Berlin 1993, vol. 1, p. 69.

⁴ [Inv. no. 1255]. M. Snodin and M. Baker, *William Beckford's Silver I*, *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXII, November 1980, p. 739.

⁵ Richard J. Campbell, *Jean-Guillaume Moitte: The Sculpture and Graphic Art 1785 – 1799*, Browns University, Rhode Island, Ph. Diss., 1982. - Snodin and Baker, op. cit. – See also *Designs for Silver*, pen, black ink, with black and gray wash, 202 x 327 mm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art; inv. no. 1978.638.1. Mary L Myers, in *French Architectural And Ornament Drawings Of The Eighteenth Century*, exhib. cat., New York 1992, p. 121, no. 74.

⁶ Odiot, *Maitre-Orfèvre du XIXe Siècle*, exhib. cat., Hôtel George V, Paris 1975.