



ÉTIENNE-BARTHÉLEMY GARNIER

1759 - Paris - 1849

Horatius Slaying his Sister Camilla after the Defeat of the Curiatii

Black pen and blue and brown wash with white heightening, on beige paper.
525 x 770 mm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Belgium

Étienne-Barthélemy Garnier was educated to become a magistrate and only later turned to painting. He studied with Louis-Jacques Durameau, Gabriel-François Doyen and Joseph-Marie Vien. Although he resisted the pervasive influence of David, he competed successfully against students of David,

winning second place in the *Prix de Rome* competition of 1787 and first prize the following year. He remained in Italy through 1793, where he produced a number of elaborately finished drawings heightened with gouache. His masterpiece was *The Family of Priam*, exhibited at the Salon in 1800, which was executed under the strong influence of David's *Leonidas at Thermopylae*. Garnier received important commissions under the Empire, collaborating with Prud'hon and Jean-François L. Mérimée on the ceiling of the *Salle de Diane* in the Louvre and with Charles Meynier and Baron Gros, among others, on the sacristy in the church of Saint-Denis. In 1808, he painted *Napoleon Studying the Map of Europe*. Later, Charles X awarded him the *Légion d'Honneur* and a pension. He became president of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1829.

Garnier had a long and successful career, however only a few drawings can be ascribed to him with certainty. The present sheet is one of the most elaborately finished examples of his bold use of *chiaroscuro* on brown paper. Two drawings, comparable in style, format and subject are in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper. They show *L'Empereur Maurice détrôné par l'usurpateur Phocas est mis à mort par les licteurs après avoir été témoin du meurtre des ses cinq fils* and *La consternation de la famille de Priam après la mort d'Hector*.¹ Other similar works are *The Banquet of Tereus*, now in a private collection² and *Socrates and Alcibiades* in Princeton³.

The subject depicts a scene from the life of Horatius⁴. The dispute between the city of Rome and nearby Alba Longa was settled with three brothers from one city [the Horatii] fighting three brothers from the other [the Curiatii] in single combat. All three Curiatii were mortally wounded and only Horatius survived. After returning home and discovering that his sister had been betrothed to one of the Curiatii, Horatius slew her.

Given the subject of this composition, Garnier must have been aware of David's celebrated masterpiece, *The Oath of the Horatii*, executed in 1784⁵, which occupies a key position both in the history of David's work and in the history of French painting⁶. This close relationship between the two artists can also be demonstrated by David's *The Death of Camilla*, a study in black chalk with gray wash now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York [Fig. 1]⁷, and by the compositional drawing, *The Victorious Horatius Returning to Rome*, in the Albertina [Fig. 2]⁸. The story depicted here leads directly to Garnier's large drawing, published here for the first time, which, as far as we know, was not used by the artist for a painting. He clearly follows David's interest in defining female expressions of grief as an effective counterpoint to male acts of bravery and patriotism.

¹ Exh. cat., *Le Néo-Classicisme français. Dessins des Musées de Province*. Grand Palais, Paris 1974-75, p. 57-59, nos. 49 and 50. – Exh. cat., *Dessins français XVIIe – XIXe siècles florilège de la collection du musée des Beaux-Arts de Quimper*, 1999, pp. 74-6, nos. 62 and 63.

² Exh. cat., *Mastery & Elegance – Two Centuries of French Drawings from the Collection of Jeffrey E. Horvitz*, Cambridge, Mass. 1998, p.324, no. 105.

³ [Inv. no. 1978-6]. Victor Carlson, in: Exh. cat., *Visions of Antiquity*, Los Angeles 1993, pp. 206-7., no. 206.

⁴ Taken from Titus-Livy [I, 23-4].

⁵ Musée du Louvre [Inv. no. RF 3692]. See, exh. cat., *Jacques-Louis David 1748-1825*, Musée du Louvre, Paris and Versailles, 1989-90, pp. 162-7, no. 67, ill.

⁶ Through David's rigorous and efficient arrangement, the superior harmony of the colors and the spiritual density of the figures, this sacrifice, transfigured by the oath, becomes the founding act of a new aesthetic and moral order. He consciously intended it to be a proclamation of the new Neoclassical style. The work became the principal model for noble and heroic historical painting of the next two decades. It also launched David's personal popularity and awarded him the right to take on his own students.

⁷ [Inv. no. 1998.203]. See, Perrin Stein, in, exh. cat., *Eighteenth-Century French Drawings in New York Collections*, New York 1999, pp. 202-3, no. 88, ill.

⁸ According to a contemporary, David was discouraged by his friends from pursuing the unpalatable subject of *The Death of Camilla*, at which point he began work on *The Oath of the Horatii*. Exh. cat., Paris and Versailles 1989-90, op. cit., p. 166.

While David and Garnier never made a painted version, David's pupil Anne-Louis Girodet (1767-1824) executed a painting of the subject in 1784 which is now in the Musée Girodet, Montargis⁹.

We would like to thank Pierre Rosenberg who has kindly advanced the attribution to Garnier.



Fig. 1: Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Camilla*, black chalk and gray wash, 367 x 395 mm. The Metropolitan Museum, New York.



Fig. 2: Jacques-Louis David, *The Victorious Horatius Returning to Rome*, pen and black ink, gray wash over black chalk. Albertina, Vienna.

⁹ Thomas E. Crow, *Emulation: Making Artists for Revolutionary France*, New Haven and London 1995, p. 85.