TWO PAINTINGS "LA COUR" AND "LES FIANCAILLES"

JEAN- FRÉDÉRIC SCHALL (STRASSBURG 1752 - PARIS 1825)

Circa: 1800

La cour
Oil on canvas
Collection label: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass. 02154, Oscar M. Lazrus Collection, New York
Height 24.4 cm, width 18.4 cm

Les fiancailles
Oil on wood
Collection label: Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass. 02154, Oscar M. Lazrus Collection, New

York
Height 23.8 cm, width 18.4 cm

The manner of painting of these uniformly very well-preserved pictures is typical of Alsatian painter Jean-Frédéric Schall. He was trained around 1768 at the Ecole Publique de Dessin in Strasbourg before entering the studio of Francesco Casanova in Paris around 1772, and in 1775 he became a student at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture under Nicolas René Jollain, and from 1778 to 1779 under Nicolas Bernard Lépicié. His galant scenes and his depictions of individual, fashionable ladies quickly became increasingly popular, as was demonstrated by the exceptionally large number of contemporary prints made after his paintings. André Girodie lists a total of 173 examples of Œuvre Gravé after Schall. Although his light, sentimental, and even frivolous depictions already seemed outdated at the time of his death, they were nevertheless an important source for the Rococo revival and for the emergence of Romanticism.

The themes of these two pictures and the way in which they are presented are both entirely in the manner of the galant era. Les fiancailles, i.e. the depiction of a betrothal is, in accordance with the tradition of galant scenes in the manner of Watteau, placed in the outdoors. The setting appears wild and turbulently animated, much like the situation depicted in which a gentleman, strikingly dressed in yellow, reaches out for his loved one, opulently clothed in red, who apparently attempt to avoid his boisterous gesture. Although unsigned there can be no doubt about Schall's authorship, which is manifested above all in the depiction of the lady, who in terms of physiognomy, gesture and treatment is exceptionally close to the female figures in signed works by Schall (cf. the picture entitled Dancer in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Nor is the animated manner of the betrothal scene is not unusual in Schall's oeuvre, its pendant is found in the painting Les fiancés, also owned by Röbbig München, although in stylistic terms the latter work is very much in the style of Louis XVI.

The second picture La cour shows a scene with an entirely different character which, in chronological terms, precedes the painting described above: again a young couple is shown seated outdoors; the soft contours of setting surround them in an almost protective way. While a young lady in a flowing dress in delicate shade of pink sits on a tree stump, with her back to the viewer, the gentleman, dressed in yellow, stands at centre of the picture. In his left hand he holds the left hand of the lady, while with the open palm of his right hand, which is turned outwards, he seems to elegantly suggest leaving. The scene depicted has a calm, restrained character that reflects the conventional manner of wooing in the 18th century. In contrast the picture of the betrothal visually suggests a transition to a different kind of relationship in which room is allowed for intimate exchanges. It is precisely this contrast between these two small paintings that constitutes their particular appeal.

Bibliography:

Girodie 1927
André Girodie, Un peintre de Fêtes Galantes: Jean-Frédéric Schall (Strasbourg 1752–Paris 1825), Strasbourg 1927.

Girodie 1935
André Girodie, Jean-Frédéric Schall, article in: Ulrich Thieme/Felix Becker: Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler, vol. 29, Leipzig 1935, p. 572.

Exhib. cat. Paris 1929
Exposition Jean-Frédéric Schall, 1752–1825, edited by André Girodie, exhib. cat. Hôtel Jean Charpentier Paris,

2–16 May 1929, Paris 1929.

Provenance:

Mr. Oscar Lazrus New York, in the depot of the Rose Art Museum. Brandeis University, Walthan, Massachusetts

Literature:

Girodie 1927; exhib. cat. Paris 1929; Girodie 1935