

RÖBBIG · MÜNCHEN

*Frühe Porzellane · Kunsthandel*



**A PAIR OF PAINTINGS "LES ÉPOUX" AND "LES FIANCÉS", PARIS C. 1790**

JEAN- FRÉDÉRIC SCHALL (STRASSBURG 1752 - PARIS 1825)

---

**Circa:** 1790

Les Fiancés ("The Betrothed")

Marked "Frederic Schall" bottom right

Oil on panel

H. 46 cm, W. 37 cm

Les Epoux ("Husband and Wife")

No recognisable marking

Oil on panel

H. 46 cm, W. 37.5 cm

The style of execution of these two very well-preserved pictures is typical for the Alsatian painter Jean-Frédéric Schall. Schall received his training around 1768 at the Ecole Publique de Dessin in Strasbourg before entering the atelier of Francesco Casanova in Paris around 1772 and becoming a student at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture under Nicolas René Jollain in 1775 and under Nicolas Bernard Lépicié from 1778 to 1779. Both his galant scenes and his single depictions of ladies of fashion enjoyed increasing popularity, as is shown by the exceptionally high number of contemporary engravings made after his paintings. In the volume *Œuvre Gravé* devoted to Schall, André Girodie lists a total of 173 numbers. The two figural scenes were painted at the end of the Schall's first creative period, in which his work was still marked by the Louis XVI style. In their composition and manner they are most closely related to the painting *L'Amant surpris* (Hutton Collection), which was reproduced in a very fine colour engraving by Charles-Melchior Descourtis and is illustrated a good number of times in the example preserved at the Hermitage in St Petersburg. Engravings were also made of the present two paintings, by Alexandre Chaponnier (1753 –1805), bearing the titles "*La Grotte de l'Hymen*" and "*L'Exemple dangereux*". In the 1907 sale catalogue the paintings were given the titles "*Les Plaisirs de l'Hymen*" and "*Les Désirs de l'Amour*". The subject matter of the pictures and their manner of presentation still belong to the galant age / the age of galanterie. The "époux" – the spouses – are depicted taking their ease in a grotto with the remains of a picnic and books that have been laid to one side. The "fiancés", by contrast, are seen in the vicinity of a peasant dwelling. While in the first picture the young couple are watched over by a stone statue of Hymen, the god of marriage ceremonies, the second picture shows the young man drawing his fiancée's attention to the billing and cooing of a pair of doves. The cock, hen, and chicks at their feet are an allusion to the joys of family life. The young lady seems to want to repel her suitor's pressing advances, though at her feet the cock is already proudly erect and crowing with glee. The two pictures do not show the same couple. André Girodie, the author of the monograph on Schall published in 1927, points out the similarity in appearance between the blonde fiancée and Schall's own wife Marie-Catherine, née Naudé. They were married in 1787. In his appreciation of the two pictures Girodie emphasises both their narrative and their painterly qualities: "The initial period of Schall's marriage inspired him to his most delicate and deeply felt works: *l'Amant surpris*, *Les Fiancés*, and *Les Epoux*." [Aux débuts du mariage de Schall se rattache l'inspiration de ses œuvres les plus délicates, les plus ressenties: *l'Amant surpris*, *les Fiances* et *les Epoux*.] Girodie describes these works as "types of paintings in Schall's second manner, in which he was influenced by Prudhon and sensitive to the art of Deboucourt" [types de peintures de la seconde manière de Schall, influencé par Prudhon e sensible à l'art de Deboucourt]. In the article on Schall in vol. XXIX of Thieme-Becker's *Künstlerlexikon* (p. 572), which dates from the mid-1930s, Girodie mentions both pictures but attributes them to the artist's "1. Periode". We know of no paintings by Schall from this time to compare them with, though the works cannot have been executed later than 1805, the year in which the engraver died. Girodie's description also contains a noteworthy passage concerning the subject matter of the paintings: "Never had the bourgeois idyll of the end of the eighteenth century found a better interpreter than the painter of these three works, one of which was engraved by Descourtis and two by Chaponnier ... The two panels from the collection of Comte Greffulhe are more intimate in their poetry. While walking through the family park, the two fiancés come to a spring of water constructed in the antique manner. They see a pair of pigeons billing and cooing and hear the crowing of the cock and the clucking of the hens looking after their chicks – and feel rising within them the desire for love. How greatly the blonde fiancée – Madame Schall – differs from this model [the

naked model of a drawing made by Schall in his atelier], chastely self-controlled as we see her sitting in her muslin dress on the bench that today is only witness to a spring ... a grotto at the back of which stands the statue of Hymen, behind the spouses, who are now tasting the joys of forthcoming parenthood. It is the story of the beginnings of Schall's marriage, but recounted later, under the Directory, when the painter was reviving his style galant." [Jamais l'idylle bourgeoise de la fin du XVIIIe siècle n'avait trouvé de meilleur peintre que l'auteur de ces trois pièces gravées, l'une par Descourtis, les deux autres par Chaponnier ... Les deux panneaux de la collection du Comte Greffulhe sont d'une poésie plus intime. Ici, les Fiancés dans leur promenade à travers le parc familial, sentent monter en eux le désir de l'amour à la vue d'un couple de pigeons becquetés, au chant de coq, aux gloussements des poules guidant leurs poussins, devant une fontaine de style antique. ... Combien la blonde fiancée – Madame Schall – diffère de ce modèle chaste et réservée dans robe de mousseline sur le banc qui n'est aujourd'hui témoin que d'un aven[This is rather unclear to me, I have to say.] ... un grotte au fond de laquelle s'érige la statue de l'Hymen derrière Les Epoux, qui goûtent les joies d'une prochaine maternité. C'est l'histoire des débuts du mariage de Schall évoquée, plus tard, sous le Directoire, alors que le peintre renovait sa manière galante.]

### **Provenance:**

Vente G. Mühlbacher, Paris, 13 – 15 May 1907, lot 50; thereafter Collection Conte Greffulhe, Paris

### **Exhibitions**

"Parfums d'interdits. L'audace sous le pinceau de Jean Honoré Fragonard, Marguerite Gérard et leurs pairs".  
Exhibition Musée Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Grasse, 26th May- 23rd September 2018

### **Literature:**

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

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

Exposition Jean-Frédéric Schall, 1752 – 1825, ed. by André Girodie, exh. cat. Hôtel Jean Charpentier Paris, 2nd – 16th Mai 1929, Paris, 1929

