
BOUNTIFUL INVENTION: DRAWINGS BY GILLES-MARIE OPPENORD (1672-1742) AND JUSTE-AURÈLE MEISSONNIER (1695-1750)

This exhibition is about two of the most imaginative draughtsmen of the 18th century - a time of extraordinary artistic innovation and unprecedented interest in drawing. Both contributed to the development of the distinctively French Rococo style, originally termed the *goût rocaille* or *goût moderne*. Oppenord was an architect by training, Meissonnier a self-proclaimed architect. For both, drawing was an essential tool in the process of designing and executing other works of art, but both cultivated drawing as an art in itself and produced virtuoso works that were collected and displayed alongside the works of the most celebrated painters.

The exhibition includes experimental studies and highly finished presentation sheets, drawings for workshop use, others for student instruction, and copies made as part of the process of translating a design into print. There are designs for boxes, furniture and interiors, for real and fantastical palaces, fountains and grottoes as well as an important group of ecclesiastical works. Several works present partial or alternative designs for the patron or viewer to consider. Some were realised in a variety of materials by builders, masons, carpenters, plasterers, goldsmiths, instrument makers and other craftsmen; others exist only on paper.

Drawings by Oppenord and Meissonnier were collected, framed and exhibited during the artists' lifetimes. Prints after their drawings spread their ideas throughout Europe, and further afield, and were copied by other artists and designers long after their designs went out of fashion in France. Most works on display are from Waddesdon's own collection and were acquired by Baron Edmond de Rothschild (1845-1934) in Paris in the late 19th-century. Many have never been exhibited before.

Curator: Juliet Carey

Location: The Drawing Rooms, Waddesdon Manor



Gilles-Marie Oppenord

Oppenord was the son of a Dutch-born cabinetmaker to Louis XIV and grew up in the palace of the Louvre, where his father had been given an apartment. He studied briefly with the architect Jules Hardouin Mansart (1646-1708), before travelling to Italy, where he studied from 1692-99 as the protégé of Edouard Colbert (1629–99), marquis de Villacerf who, as Surintendant des Bâtiments du Roi, was in charge of the king's buildings. Oppenord's Italian sketchbooks reveal a passionate interest in the architecture and figurative decoration of the Baroque, particularly the work of Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) and Francesco Borromini (1599-1667). Back in France, Oppenord was appointed the Directeur Général des Bâtiments (Director of Buildings) to the duc d'Orléans in 1708. When Orléans became Regent of France in 1715, Oppenord remodelled his palace, the Palais-Royal, designing the interior and its furnishings. He also worked for private clients, including the financier and collector, Pierre Crozat (1665-1740) and the Church – most notably as chief architect of Saint-Sulpice in Paris. Oppenord's elaborate visual language encompasses the formality of Louis XIV's courtly architecture and the playfully subversive Rococo style which he helped to invent. Contemporaries recognised that his draughtsmanship went far beyond the practical requirements of a designer's workshop. His drawings were collected by fellow designers and artists, including André-Charles Boulle (1642-1732) and Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) and collectors, including the Swedish diplomat Count Carl Gustav Tessin (1695- 1770). Oppenord's were the only drawings by an architect in Jean de Julienne's (1686-1766) collection of Old and Modern Masters. The writer, collector and engraver Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville (1680-1765) said that he drew like a painter.

Oppenord's work was made widely known through prints. The collector, engraver and print publisher Gabriel Huquier (1695-1772) owned over 2,000 of his drawings and published three major series of prints, including 'Le Grand Oppenord' (1748-51). The drawings that



Huquier chose to reproduce emphasise Oppenord's achievement as a designer of ornament rather than an architect, so it is interesting that among the Waddesdon drawings there are examples of architectural profiles, plans and working copies.

In a design by Huquier (left), for a trade card advertising his stock of prints for students of drawings, portfolios of works by Oppenord and Meisssonier are visible to the right of the chair, shelved with modern French masters.

Top left: Gabriel Huquier, Portrait of Gilles-Marie Oppenord, from Oeuvres de Gille Marie Oppenord, 2ème Recueil, 1900 (later reprinting) . Photo © Kline Books.

Left: Gabriel Huquier, Design for a trade card, 1749, pen, ink and wash, watercolour and black chalk, black chalk, 235 x 148mm; Paris, National



Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier

Born in Turin and apprenticed to his father, a sculptor and goldsmith, Meissonnier moved to Paris in 1714, where he trained as a metalworker and was employed at the royal furnishings manufactory of Gobelins. In 1724, he received a warrant as master goldsmith from Louis XV and, in 1726, was appointed Dessinateur de la Chambre et du Cabinet du Roi (Designer for the King's Bedchamber and Cabinet), so was responsible for the design of royal festivities and firework displays.

The influential art critic Abbé Leblanc (1707-81) commented that, whereas in London, the greatest goldsmiths are only ever craftsmen, in Paris, they were regarded differently, as 'great Designers, Sculptors and Great Men in their field.' Meissonnier worked for the French court, the Church and for various European aristocrats. Projects might be entire buildings, interiors and large-scale paintings, or furniture, table settings, light-fittings and personal accessories, such as snuffboxes and cane handles. His work is characterised by asymmetry, curving, scrolling lines and semi-abstract natural forms- particularly shells, rocks and watery patterns. In many of his drawings at Waddesdon, he used ink wash and watercolour to create illusionistic space and flowing movement. A group of drawings with particularly elaborate 18th-century mounts bears witness to the admiration of contemporaries.

Few drawings by Meissonnier survive, but many were published as prints during his lifetime and reveal the depth of his architectural learning and inventiveness of his imagination. The artist himself selected the plates for Huquier's splendid, folio-size publication entitled *OEuvre de Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier* (1742-1751).

The title page (above), designed by the artist, shows the high cultural status of the best designers in 18th-century France.

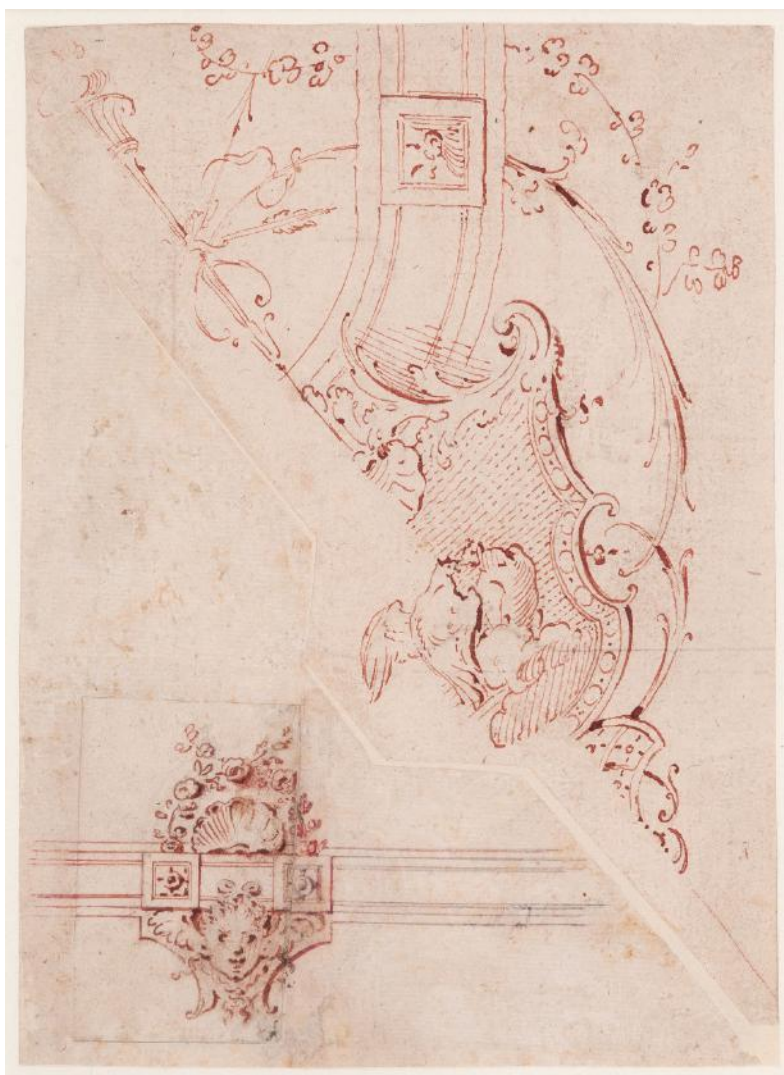
Around the cartouche inscribed with his skills (painter, sculptor and architect) and titles, are figures and objects emblematic of the arts and sciences, trade, war and natural abundance.

The whole design springs from the offering of seashells at the bottom right.



Top left: Gabriel Huquier, Portrait of Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier, from *OEuvre de Juste Aurelle Meissonnier*, 1723-1735; Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (The National Trust), Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957; acc. no. 3227. Photo: Mike Fear © The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.

Right: Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier, Titlepage, *OEuvre de Juste-Aurele Meissonnier*, 1723-1735; Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (The National Trust), Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957; acc. no. 3227. Photo: Mike Fear © The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Design for details of the decoration of a coved ceiling cornice, c. 1720

Pen and wash in purple-red ink, and black chalk on paper

Two roughly triangular drawings have been pasted down onto a backing sheet so that they lie beside each other, but do not touch. The upper portion shows half of a repeat design for the corner of ceiling, centred on a cartouche with a pair of doves. The drawing below shows a straight run of the same border moulding, whose ruled lines contrast with the freer penmanship of the shell and mask ornament. Although small, the winged female head catches the viewer's eye with its fixed, serious gaze.

Acc. no. 1870



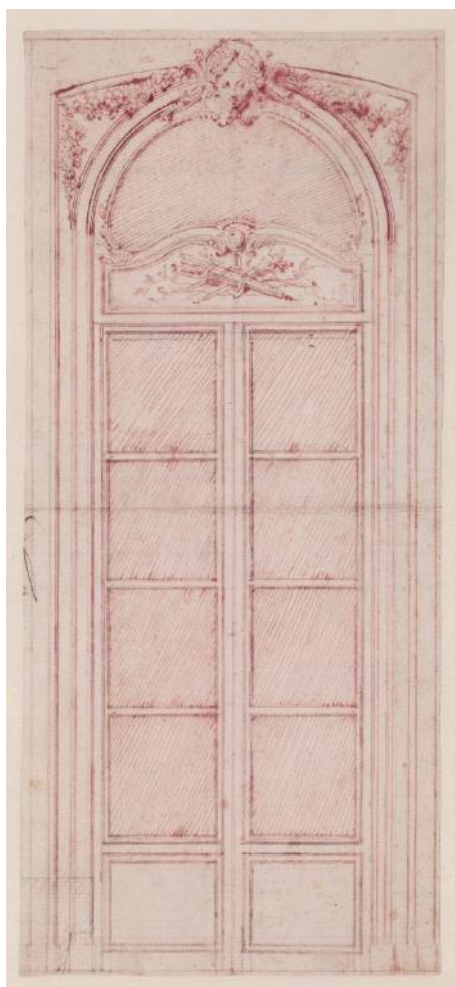
Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Alternative designs for a mirror frame with mascarons, c. 1720-25

Red chalk counterproof on paper

This drawing presents two alternative designs for the top right-hand corner of a mirror frame. The upper one is crowned with a head of Mercury (messenger of the gods and god of commerce). Shell forms, pearls and floral garlands embody wealth and plenty. Although the helmet in the lower design introduces a martial theme, there is something playfully precarious about the way it appears to be attached to the edge of the frame by its earflap and a ribbon. A counterproof is a one-off impression of a chalk drawing, made by placing a dampened sheet of paper over the original and applying pressure, ideally, using a printing press.

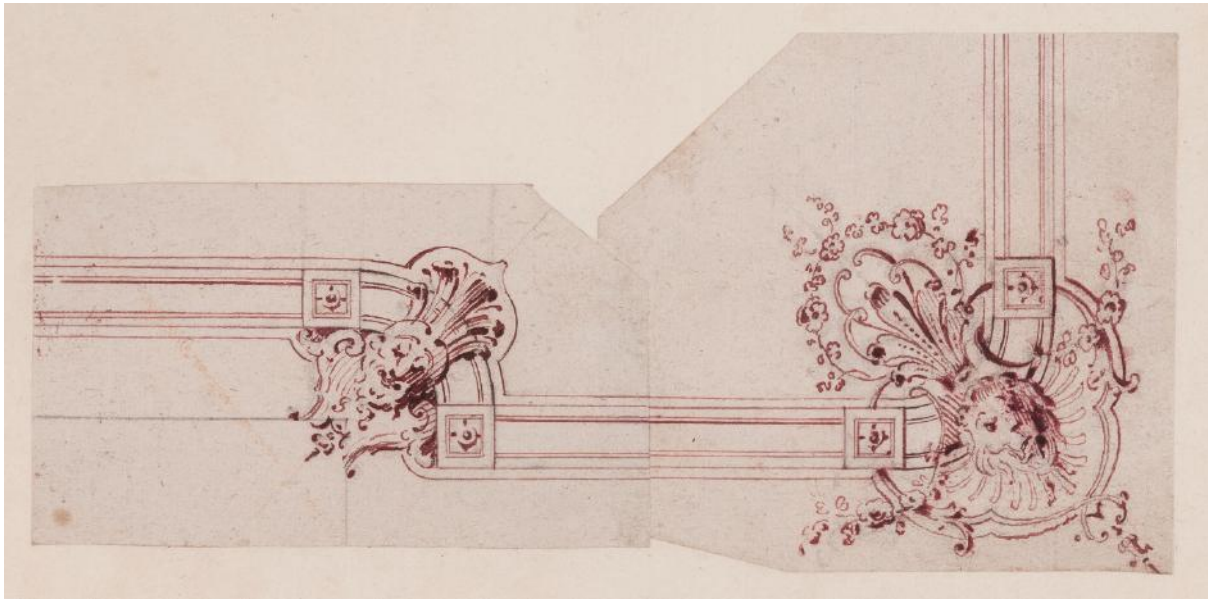
On loan from The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for a French window, c. 1720-30
Pen and purple-brown ink, and black chalk on paper

Ornamental devices introduce the asymmetry of life and nature into the regular arrangement of squares, rectangles and a semicircle that form the framework of this design. The trophy in the lintel panel includes a quiver of arrows and a flaming torch, representing Love. Floral garlands and a female mask crown the archivolt. Oppenord modelled the face with decision, particularly the eyelids. Human or divine mascarons like this were used both to animate and to ennoble doors and windows.

Acc. no. 1872



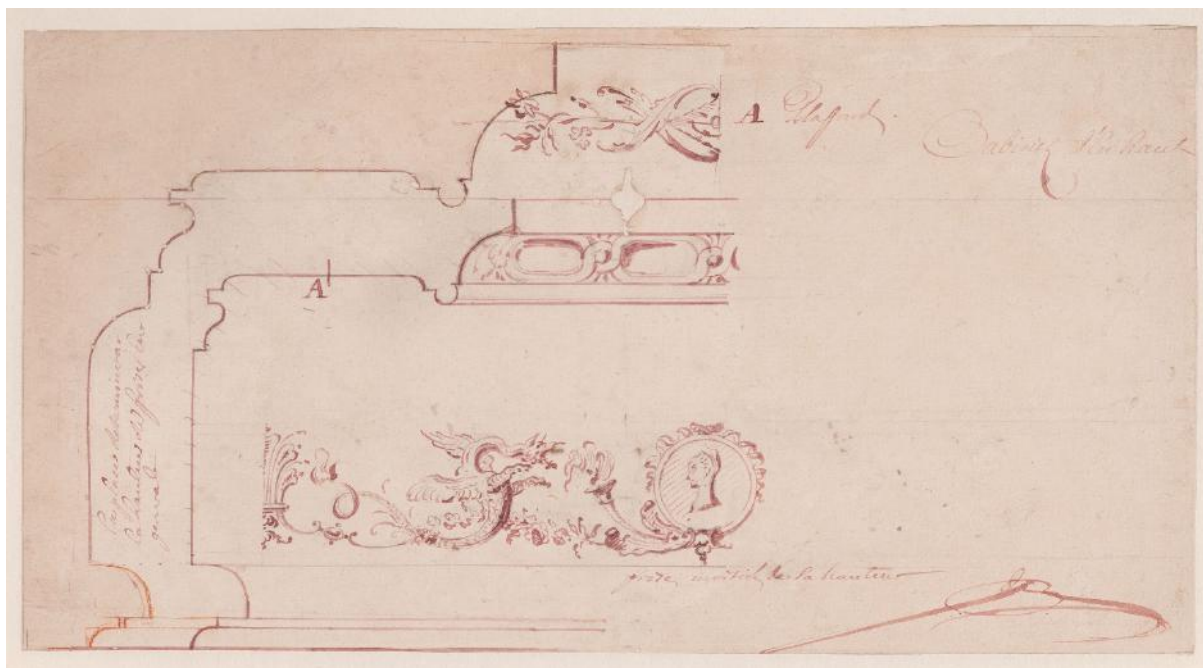
Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Design for the decoration of a coved ceiling cornice, c. 1720

Pen and purple-red ink, wash and black chalk on paper

This design, for the outer border of the cove of a ceiling cornice is drawn across two pieces of paper. It is probably part of the same scheme as the work displayed beside it, whose billing doves contrast with the fiercer lion's head and almost-human head in this work. In some areas Oppenord used hatching and solid areas of ink to suggest how the design would be modelled in three dimensions. In other areas – for example, the floral tendrils – he used the pen calligraphically to create pattern but not depth.

Acc. no. 1869



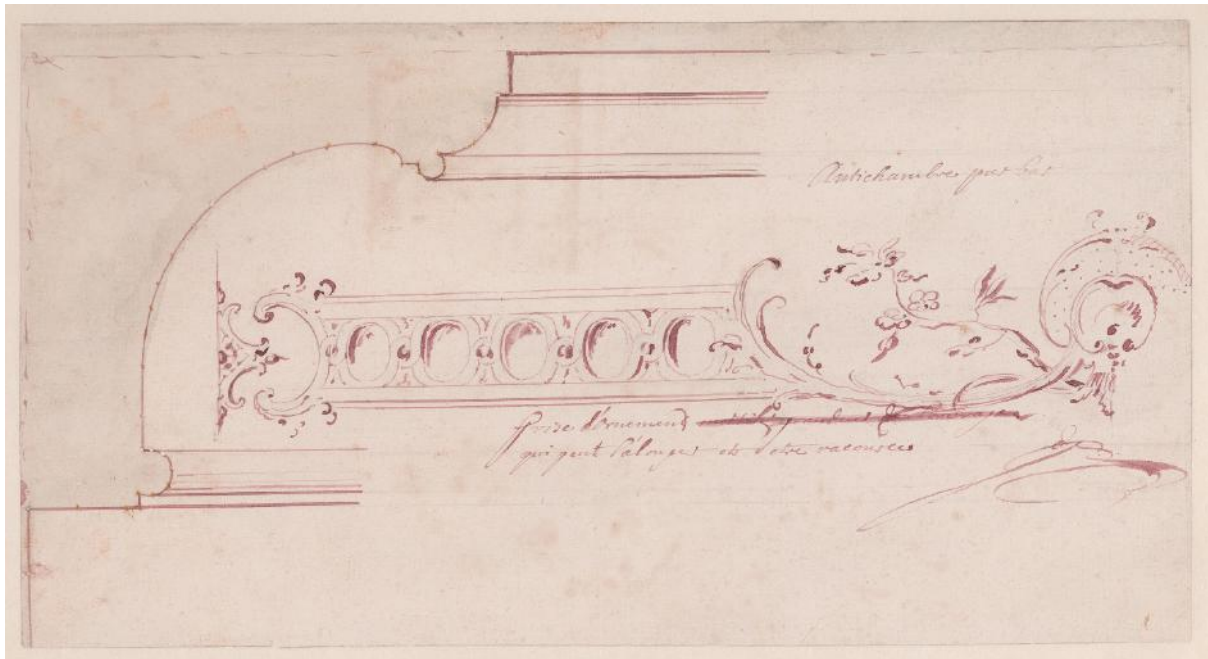
Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Design for a frieze and soffit enrichment of the ceiling cornice of a cabinet or study possibly for the Hôtel Crozat, rue de Richelieu, Paris, c. 1720

Pen and wash, in purple-red ink, watercolour and black chalk on paper

This drawing gives information about the design in profile and in elevation. In the design for the frieze, across the bottom of the sheet, Oppenord contrasts the poise of the classicizing medallion head with the dynamism of the dragon rearing and roaring at a flaming torch.

Acc. no. 1860



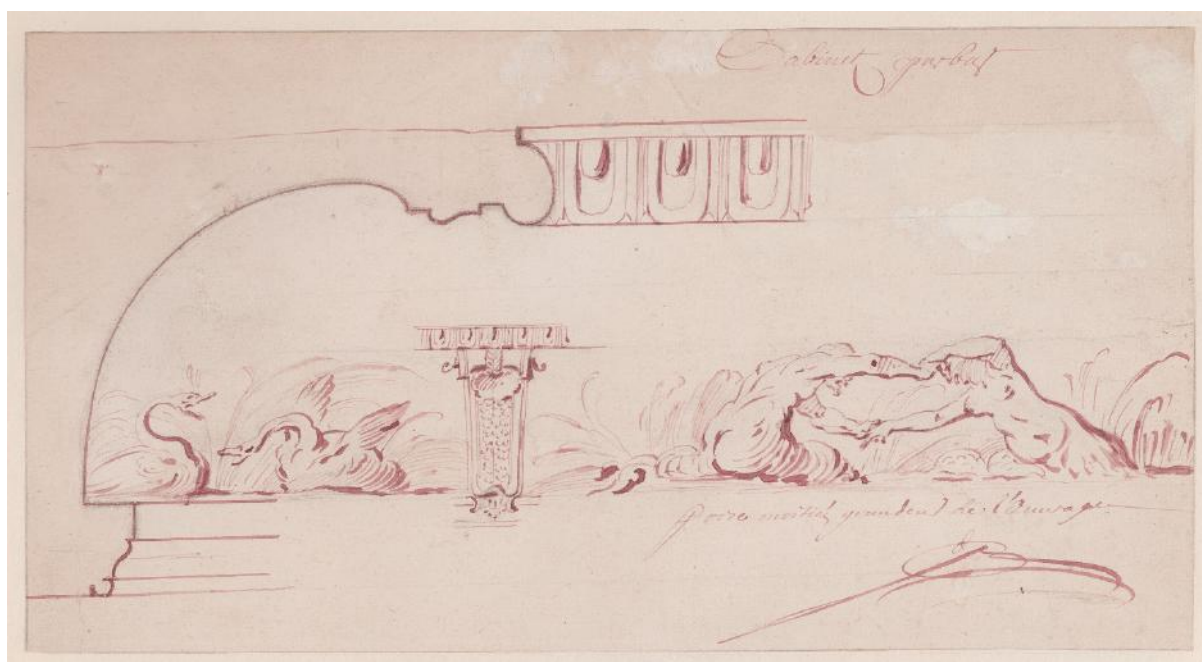
Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Design for a frieze in a coved ceiling cornice for an ante-room, possibly for the Hôtel Crozat, rue de Richelieu, Paris, c. 1720

Pen and wash, in purple-red ink, watercolour and black chalk on paper

This is one of four drawings on display that may be for the Paris house of the financier and collector Pierre Crozat (1665-1740). Oppenord designed and remodelled parts of the Hôtel Crozat from 1715 onwards and, from 1730 until his death, leased an apartment there. The tiny pricked holes, visible along the curved profile of the moulding on the left, were used to transfer the design to another piece of paper.

Acc. no. 1862



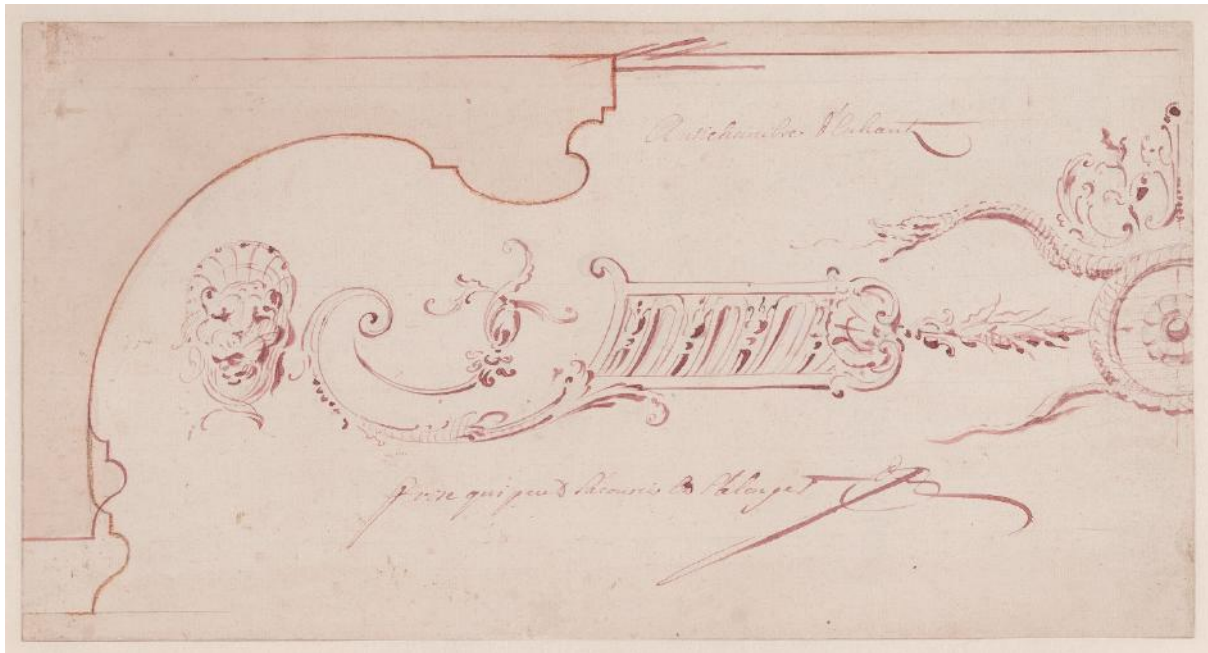
Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Design for a frieze in the coved ceiling cornice of a ground-floor cabinet, possibly for the Hôtel Crozat, rue de Richelieu, Paris, c. 1720

Pen and wash, in purple-red ink, watercolour and black chalk on paper

In this working drawing, Oppenord reserved his most vigorous penmanship for the figurative design of the frieze. On the left, two swans confront each other while, on the right, a triton and water nymph are locked in struggle - or is it courtship? Oppenord denotes the tip of the triton's elbow with a single, forceful dot.

Acc. no. 1866



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Design for a frieze in a coved ceiling cornice of an ante-room, possibly for the Hôtel Crozat, rue de Richelieu, Paris, c. 1720

Pen and wash, in purple-red ink, watercolour and black chalk on paper

The run of motifs for the frieze includes a lion's head, C-scroll foliage and, on the far right, a rosette scrolled by a snake with a very long tongue. The inscription explains that the frieze can be shortened or lengthened as required. As a young man, Oppenord was advised to pay special attention to his handwriting, which was an important signifier of social status. In this drawing, the form and placement of the words and the rhythms of the cursive script complement those of the architecture.

Acc. no. 1861



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for a lock plate, c. 1710
Red and black chalk, and pen and ink, on paper

This design for a lock plate is composed around a ring formed from two elongated dolphins, with smoke, or maybe sea-foam, issuing from their mouths. The sheet was extended by adding a strip of paper to the left and thinner strips on the other sides. The laurel leaves on the far left are by an unidentified, later hand and were probably added to make the work more useful to a craftsman or more complete for a collector.

Acc. no. 2105

This work is both a drawing and a print. Oppenord drew three different parts of his house on a sheet of etchings after drawings by his friend, Antoine Watteau (1684-1721). The etchings, from Jean de Julienne's *Figures de différents caractères...* (1727), were designed to be read horizontally, but Oppenord re-orientated the page and created a playful conversation between his architectural details and Watteau's paired heads. While the two ink and wash drawings on the left-hand side intrude over the borders of the etchings, the drawing on the right appears to disappear behind what momentarily looks like two separate pieces of paper.

Acc. no. 2120



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for a garden fountain, c. 1720-30
Pen and ink on paper

Although many of the elements of this design could have been realized in stone, it was created in the spirit of a *capriccio* –a fanciful collection of architectural or sculpted fragments. The figures leaning on the balustrade are dwarfed by the statues in the fountain and recall the toga-clad bystanders in prints by Jean Le Pautre (1618-1682) for fountains, vases and grottoes.

By varying the pressure with which he applied pen to paper, Oppenord made the lines swell and taper. This is particularly clear in the strokes with which he modelled the thigh, belly and upper arm of the nymph on top of the fountain. The freedom with which the trees in the background are sketched emphasizes the contrasting regularity of the hatched, crosshatched, flecked and scaly panels that decorate the flatter surfaces of the fountain.

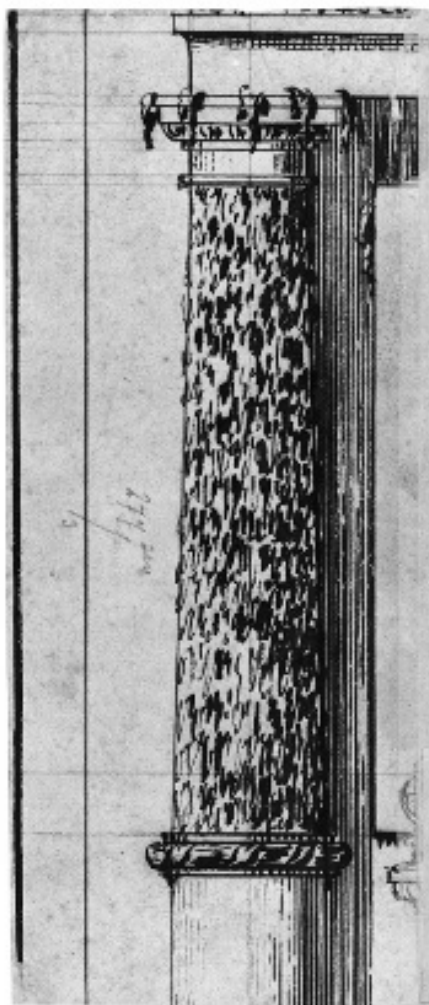
Acc. no. 1857



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for a carriage entrance or portecochère,
1720s
Pen, ink and wash on paper

Oppenord shows half of the door of this carriage entrance, more of the architectural surround and, behind it, an Italianate courtyard and gardens. The design pays homage to the work of Francesco Borromini (1599-1667) (in for example, the scrolls on the pediment) and other designers, which Oppenord had encountered in Rome. Despite the precise detail and evidence of careful measurement and alignment, the drawing is also a kind of capriccio. Oppenord shows us the structures that he has envisaged beginning to turn into ruins: plants are growing out of the crumbling stone where the archway is cut away.

Acc. no. 1858



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Fragment of a design for an aedicule, c. 1720
Pen, ink and black chalk on paper

This fragment might originally have formed part of the design displayed beside it. Oppenord used a narrow grid to create shadow below the entablature, fine lines and areas of concentrated darkness to suggest the irregular texture of the column, and straight and tall parallel lines to evoke the smooth-cut stone to its right. The inventory number of Edmond de Rothschild (1845-1934), who acquired it in the 19th century, is inscribed on the left-hand side.

Acc. no. 2128.1



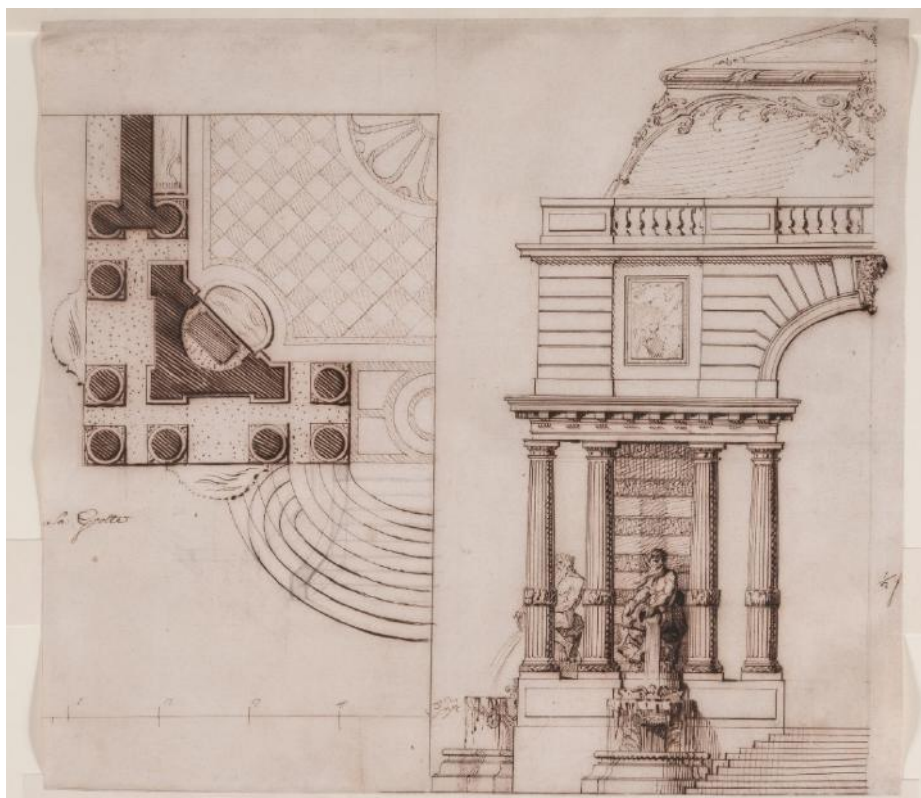
Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Design for an aedicule with a vase, probably for a garden pavilion, c. 1720

Pen, ink and black chalk on paper

This drawing shows one half of an architectural structure centred on a monumental vase, which may have been intended to incorporate a fountain. Oppenord creates a tension between the solidity of stone and the eroding movement of water. The shaft of the column and the entablature are embellished with *congélations* – ornament imitating the appearance of stalactites or icicles – and frozen water appears about to drip from the coping, just under the balustrade at the top.

Acc. no. 1874



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for a garden pavilion, c. 1720
Pen, ink and chalk on paper

This work relates to a proposal for a garden building for Joseph Clemens von Wittelsbach, Archibishop-Elector of Cologne (1671-1723), probably for his gardens at Poppelsdorf or Brühl. A slightly different version of the design was engraved in Huquier's *Le Grand Oppenord* (1748-51, illustrated), with a garden setting.

Possibly prepared for the patron, this drawing shows the pavilion in both plan (on the left) and elevation (on the right). It is precisely measured, highly finished and makes clear the elaborate leadwork on the roof and the marbling of the panel above the fountain. The dramatic contrast of light and dark focuses the eye on one of two river gods pouring water into shell-shaped basins. Vigorous penwork expresses the force and direction of the falling water. In the equivalent place on the ground plan, calligraphic lines suggest the ripples across the surface.



Acc. no. 2114



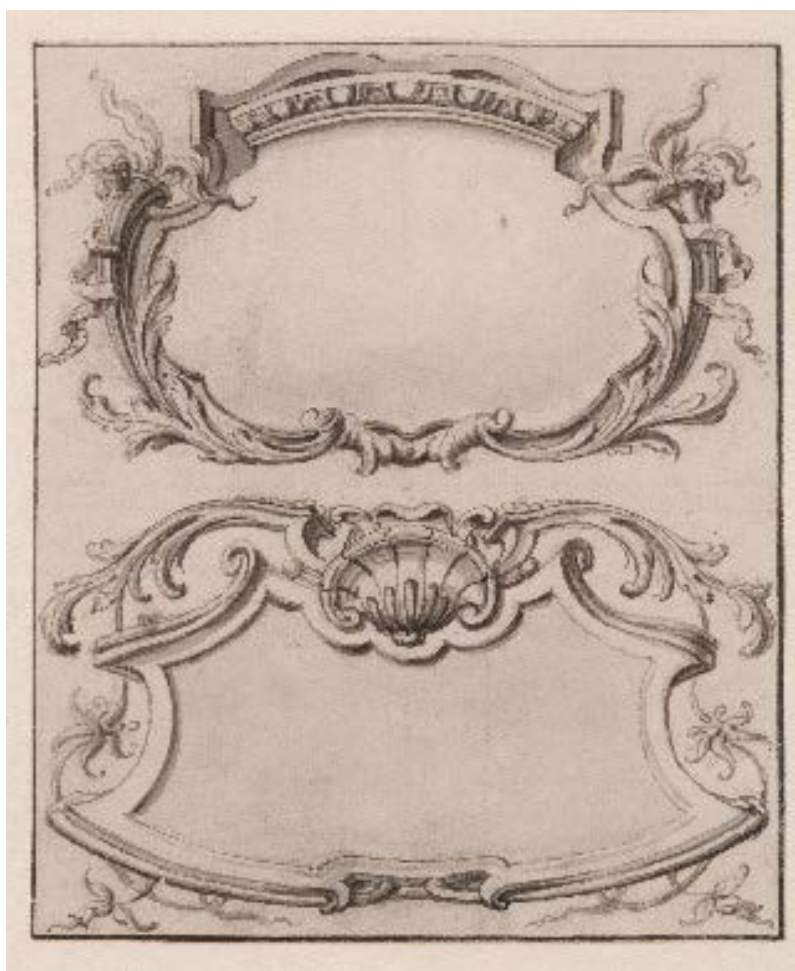
Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Design for two cartouches and two costumed mascarons, c. 1700-20

Pen, ink, wash and black chalk on paper

The laughing mask that crowns the upper cartouche and the fancy dress of the two heads on either side suggest a theatrical theme. The trophy surmounting the lower cartouche is centred on a turban and incorporates military and masquerade elements. The tassels that swing out from its sides invite the viewer to imagine what would happen if they were pulled. Would the curtain-like drapery rise to reveal more of the shield decorated with scales?

Acc. no. 1517



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for two cartouches, c. 1700-20
Pen, ink, wash and black chalk on paper

The cartouche - this kind of ornate frame around a form derived from a shield, tablet or scroll - offered designers the chance to show off their powers of invention. In the upper design, Oppenord played with the visual similarities between the acanthus leaves that cling to the base of the frame, the ribbons that twine around the torches on either side and the flames that emerge from the torches.

Acc. no. 1516



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

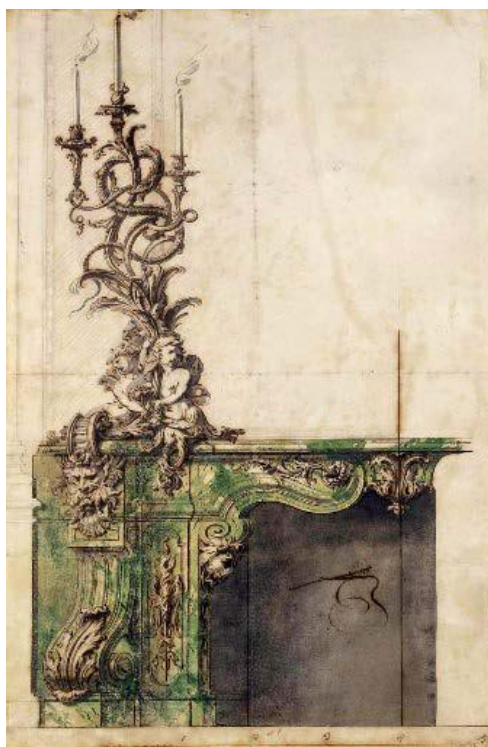
Design for a commemorative or dedicatory headpiece or title-page, c. 1725

Pen, ink and wash, bodycolour and black chalk on paper

This is a particularly splendid example of Oppenord's drawings for book illustration, a medium that appealed to him throughout his career. The central scene shows Jean-Baptiste Colbert, marquis de Torcy (1655-1748) presenting the final terms of the Peace of Utrecht to the duc d'Orléans, Regent of France. The marquis de Torcy, whose coat of arms appears in the drawing, was the nephew of Louis XIV's Minister of Finances, also called Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), and one of the key negotiators of the Peace of Utrecht (1715), which ended the War of the Spanish Succession.

In Oppenord's drawing, the historic event, depicted in modern dress, with individualized faces, is transposed onto a mythic level by the grand-scale figures that surround it: a winged figure of Fame or Victory, trumpeting the achievement abroad and Bellona, Roman goddess of War. In the foreground, two unicorns, rendered with irresistible naturalism, spring outwards, into the clouds.

Acc. no. 2118



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for a chimneypiece, c. 1714-1717
Pen, ink and wash, watercolour and black chalk on paper

This magnificent work was made in Oppenord's capacity as chief architect to the duc d'Orléans, who became Regent of France following the death of Louis XIV in 1715. It is a design for the chimneypiece in the gallery of the Palais-Royal, Paris, the seat of the Orléans, that Oppenord remodelled to reflect the duc's new status.

The drawing provides information for the craftsmen who would execute the design - for example, how the chimneypiece relates to the panelling to its left and to the mirror above. However, its high finish and dramatic presentation suggest that it might also have been used to persuade the patron of the impact of the finished piece. Oppenord mixed gum arabic (from tree sap) with watercolour to add sheen to the green marble. He placed lit candles in the candelabrum, whose smoking flames are blown by a breeze from the left. Faces and animal forms animate the design: a lion's head, a satyr mask, two putti, and a snake entwined in the metalwork.

The artist's paraph (a shortened form of signature) appears in the fireplace and may have marked a particular stage in the commissioning process. The vertical line to its right (in highly acidic iron gall ink) marks the centre of the chimneypiece. According to the architect Jacques-François Blondel (1705-1774), the scale of this chimneypiece made it impractical for a fire, but highly expressive of princely magnificence.

Acc. no. 2119



Attributed to Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Part of a vault at the foot of the Scala Regia in the Vatican and a design for sphinxes, c. 1695
(with additions possibly of c.1710-20)

Pen, ink and black chalk on paper

As a student at the French Academy in Rome, Oppenord studied classical antiquity at first hand, but showed particular interest in more modern achievements. The main part of this drawing depicts some of Bernini's sculptural decoration above the entrance arch at the foot of the Scala Regia (Royal Staircase) in Rome, which served as the entrance to the Vatican Palace. The sphinxes at the bottom of the sheet were probably added later, perhaps after Oppenord's return to France. Unlike the smaller, female sphinxes in the upper register, which face each other across a scallop shell, these male and female sphinxes are placed back to back, their tails interlocking.

Acc. No. 1856



After Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1676-1742)

Design for a fountain, c. 1750

Pen, ink and wash on paper

This drawing, by an unidentified artist, is copied from a plate in Gabriel Huquier's *Le Grand Oppenord* (1748-51, illustrated). The draughtsman has translated the linear print into something at once more solid, because of the contrast between light and deep the deep shadow, and more fluid, due to the use of liquid wash laid on with a brush.

Acc. no. 1867

Gilles-Marie Oppenord, *Frontispiece from Oeuvres*, 1750; Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (The National Trust), Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957; acc. no. 3231.
Photo: Mike Fear © The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.





After Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1676-1742)
Capriccio with a garden fountain, c. 1730-50
Black and red chalk, and pen and black ink, on paper

This is a copy, by an unidentified artist, of a red chalk drawing by Oppenord (illustrated). The copyist misunderstood certain details of Oppenord's work, losing, for example, a monster's head that appears at the base of the fountain in the original.

The Waddesdon drawing is not the only instance of Oppenord's fountain being copied. It appears in several *fêtes galantes* by Nicolas Lancret (1690-1743) (detail illustrated), although without the rather comical rooster that surmounts it in the drawing.



Top right: Gilles-Marie Oppenord, *Fountain*, c. 1730-c. 1750; red chalk on paper; 281 x 198mm; Nationalmuseum, Stockholm; acc. no. HCC0399. Photo: Cecilia Hot © National Museum.

Bottom right: Nicolas Lancret, *La danse entre le pavillon et la fontaine*, 1732.
Photo: Wolfgang Pfauder © Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg.



Acc. no. 1030



Office of Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for the console-bracket of a cartel clock or barometer, c. 1720
Red chalk counterproof on paper

A counterproof or offset is made by placing a damp sheet of paper on the surface of a drawing and applying pressure to create a one-off impression of the original. Counterproofing was an easy way of producing the copies of drawings required by the craftsmen who contributed to the creation of furniture and scientific instruments. This work shows one half of the console-bracket, with just a part of the base of the clock or barometer frame visible at the top.

Acc. no. 1876



Office of Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for a barometer and/or thermometer, c. 1720
Red chalk counterproof on paper

Barometers, for predicting the weather by measuring air pressure, and thermometers, for measuring temperature, were expensive and fashionable in 18th-century France. A moderate climate was considered crucial to French wellbeing and cultural superiority.

The right-hand elevation in this drawing shows the lower half of the instrument, which could have housed the barometer, whose dial would have sprung from the shell-shaped cartouche above the satyr's head. The upper half of the case is shown on the left and would have held the glass shaft up which the mercury rose and fell.

Acc. no. 2115



Office of Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for the base of a pedestal clock or barometer, c. 1720
Red chalk counterproof on paper

As a young man, Oppenord was advised to master the human figure. In this design, the complicated posture of the central nymph suggests she is trying to balance on the shallow console-bracket. In the finished work, she would have been sculpted in bronze, almost in the round.

Acc. no. 1877



Attributed to, or after, Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for decoration of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, c. 1725
Red chalk counterproof on paper

This is a large-scale, working drawing for the low-relief decoration of a pendentive in the crossing vault of the church of Saint-Sulpice. It represents an incense burner, with smoke emerging from its pierced lid. The sculptural ornament was carried out by Michel-Ange Slodtz (1705-64) and his brothers, which has led scholars to suggest this sheet (and the one displayed to its right) may be a copy by one of them after the chief architect Oppenord's original design.

Acc. no. 2117



Attributed to, or after, Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for decoration of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, c. 1725
Red chalk counterproof on paper

This drawing completes the design displayed to its left, with the fluted decoration of the tapering springing of the pendentive. The studies on the left of this sheet show detailing and profiles of the framework of panels, roundels and running mouldings.

Acc. no. 2116



After Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Two designs for trophy cartouches in the crown of an arched doorway or window, 1740s

Red chalk, probably counterproof, on paper

Cartouches, derived from shield- or tablet-motifs, into which inscriptions or heraldic devices could be introduced, provided impressive crowning features for doors or windows. It has been suggested that this sheet is a reworked counterproof taken by the architect Jacques-François Blondel (1705-1775) from a drawing after Oppenord that Gabriel Huquier (1695-1772) would have made during the process of engraving. Blondel trained under Oppenord and recommended that his own students study Oppenord's drawings, though not so much his architecture.

Acc. no. 1878



Attributed to Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Capriccio with a garden fountain, c. 1730
Red chalk counterproof on paper

This assembly of statuary depicts, left to right: Athena (goddess of Wisdom, Reason and War), a putto on a dolphin and Venus (goddess of Love), spouting water from her breasts, in a niche decorated with doves and shells. The drawing is made up of counterproofs from two different drawings, juxtaposed to create a new design. Two red chalk drawings were laid side by side, and a single sheet of paper laid over them to create the impression. The narrow strip with Athena was sliced roughly and the foliage behind her is mismatched with the architecture to its right. This remarkable sheet demonstrates how artists sometimes cut drawings up and rearranged them to experiment with new designs.

Acc. no. 1859

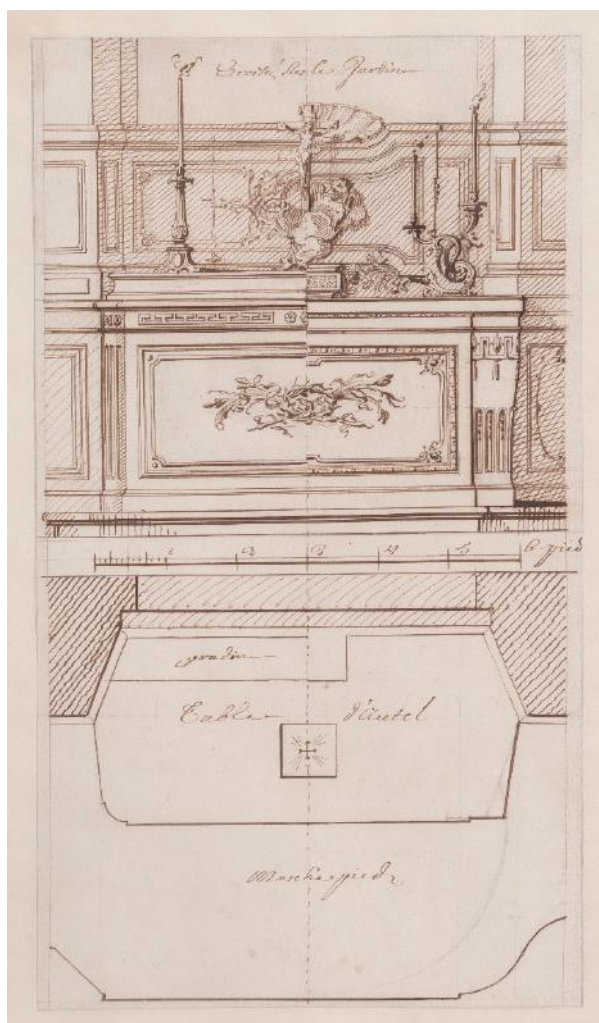


Attributed to, or after, Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Studies for the decoration of the end wall of a salon, 1730s-40s
Pen and wash in purple and black ink on paper

The winged female figures with cymbals and trumpets and the crouching satyrs with pan pipes and flutes suggest that these studies were made for the design of a music room. The goat's foot of the console table on the left underlines the Bacchanalian tone. The drawing was engraved in reverse by Gabriel Huquier (1695-1772) in *Le Grand Oppenord* (1748-51; illustrated), with slight variations. It is hoped that comparison of the sheet with others in this exhibition will help clarify whether it is by Oppenord himself or was perhaps copied by an assistant in his office.



Acc. no. 1868



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for the altar of an oratory in an apartment, c. 1720-5
Pen, ink and black chalk on paper

The bottom half of this drawing shows the plan of an altar for a private apartment. The upper half offers, in elevation, two alternatives for its design. The left-hand option has classicizing ornament and a single, tapering candlestick. The right-hand alternative is full of natural, more sculptural forms: an altar front with a swelling console and a two-branched candelabrum with dynamic curves and counter-curves. In contrast to the austerity of the first proposal for Christ's cross, the staging of the second version includes a scallop shell and billowing clouds.

Acc. no. 1863



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)

Sheet of details principally for the interior elevations of the west front range of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, c. 1725

Pen and purple-red ink, watercolour and black chalk on paper

This drawing is a collection of fragments assembled to create a picturesque whole. It brings together components of the sculptural decoration of Saint-Sulpice. Oppenord was in charge of the remodelling of the church from 1725-31. The artist often used purple ink. Areas of pale ochre wash separate and partially frame the individual details in this composite arrangement.

Acc. no. 1864



Gilles-Marie Oppenord (1672-1742)
Design for a High Altar, c. 1704-9
Pen, ink and black chalk on paper

Oppenord made numerous designs for High Altars and tabernacles, but it is not known if this particular drawing was made for a specific commission. It is drawn across two sheets of paper and the plan of a variant of the altar is presented on the right.

The powerful central group, reminiscent of Italian Baroque sculpture, represents Christ borne up by angels. Oppenord amplifies the tension between gravity and ascension, the heavy weight of the human body and the liberating power of divinity. The angels holding the top of the canopy seem to be held in place by the arched entablature above them and the curtain twisted around a column does not look as if it will provide a lasting anchor.

Acc. no. 2123



Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)

Design for the façade of the church of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, 1726

Pen, ink and wash, watercolour, bodycolour and black chalk on paper

The ancient church of Saint-Sulpice had been left unfinished in 1675 and its appearance today owes much to the programme of completion and remodelling that began in 1715 and continued until late in the 18th century. Meissonnier's design was presented, probably unsolicited, to the church authorities in 1726, while Oppenord was still in charge of the church's completion. It recalls the undulating façade of Francesco Borromini's church San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (1665-1667) in Rome.

This drawing helps the viewer envisage every detail of what is being proposed, from the shape of the windowpanes to the ridged roofline and sculpted finials to the gestures of angels. The sculptural details over the main portal and over the left-hand window were drawn on small pieces of paper and then pasted on to the larger sheet, covering up evidence of earlier ideas. The artist used white bodycolour to clean up the area around the right-hand spire so that he could redraw it crisply in black ink. To create sheen on the green window glass, he mixed the pigment with shellac or gum arabic and may even have polished it with an agate stone.

Acc. no. 2129



Benoît II Audran (?) (1698-1772) after Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)
Design for a monstrance for the Carmelite nuns of Poitiers, 1727
Red chalk, with an incised grid, on paper

This design incorporates the asymmetry, shell-like decoration and curving, clinging, swelling forms of Meissonnier's style at its most inventive. The draughtsman copied Meissonnier's lost original drawing in order to engrave it: each chalk mark is clear enough for translation on to the copper plate. The monstrance was intended to contain the consecrated Host, in the central sunburst surrounded by cherubim. The corn and vines laden with grapes – as constituents of the bread and wine – are symbols of the Eucharist. Originally designed for a convent in Poitiers, a version by a German goldsmith (1752; illustrated) bears witness to the dissemination of Meissonnier's designs across Europe.



Johann Gottfried Schlaubitz, Monstrance from Frombork, 1752. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

Acc. no. 1356

Image unavailable

Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)

Design for the interior of the Church of The Order of the Holy Spirit, Paris, 1726-31

Pen, ink and wash, watercolour and bodycolour on paper

A French order of chivalry, the Order of the Holy Spirit was founded in 1578 and was composed of members of the high aristocracy with the king as its Grand Master. Louis XV hoped to build a church on the quai des Augustins as a setting for its official ceremonies and Meissonnier was one of several designers, including Nicolas Pineau (1684-1754) and Giovanni Niccolò Servandoni (1695-1766), who submitted designs. The project never came to fruition.

This highly finished presentation sheet represents Meissonnier as an architect thinking on the grandest scale. It encompasses ceiling painting and sculpture as well as small sacramental objects. Almost uniquely among the works in this exhibition, the drawing includes people: a priest at the altar, a suppliant on the altar steps and fashionably dressed figures in the lower spaces. Meissonnier also included glimpses of the Paris street into which the church is imagined.

On loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London



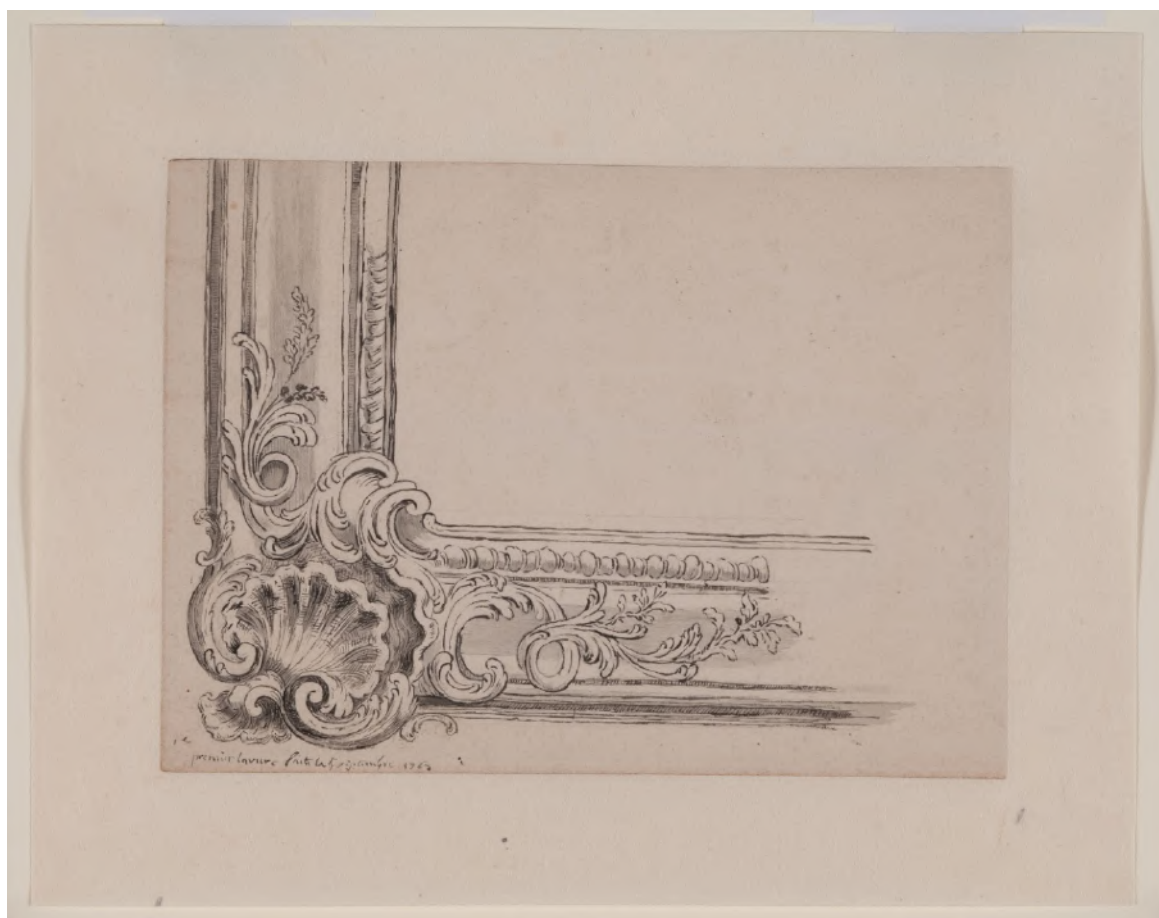
Claude Boucher (d. 1756) and P. Aveline (1702-1760) after Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)
Christ on the Cross, c. 1745

Offset of etching with engraving, graphite, black chalk and ink wash (border: etching on blue paper)

The flat frontality of the cross, the rough stakes at its base and the bleakness of the rocks silhouetted behind it contrast with the *rocaille* border to intensify the emotional power of this image. Huquier published a print after Meissonnier's depiction of the Crucifixion and this may be one of 29 proofs of the engraving that are recorded in Huquier's posthumous sale.

This is a retouched offset of the engraving, made, before the printing plate was complete, by placing a sheet of paper on the print while it was still damp, to create a one-off copy in reverse. It was almost certainly Huquier who drew on it, to suggest how the image could be improved. He added vertical lines to the upper two thirds of the cross, strengthened the modelling of Christ's body and darkened the areas above and below His left arm. It is pasted down onto a backing sheet and further set off by etched framing strips.

Acc. no. 2002



After Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)

Design for a rocaille frame, 1762

Pen, ink and wash on paper

This drawing, by an unknown hand, shows the bottom left-hand corner of the same frame shown in the work displayed above it. The inscription (*premier lavure(?) faite le 5 septembre 1762*) suggests that it may have been the subject of an exercise in a drawing academy created for designers and

craftsmen. Unlike the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture), where students drew sculpture casts and life models, these schools presented students with two-dimensional prints and drawings to copy.

Acc. no. 1364



Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)
Jean-Victor, baron de Besenval (1671-1736), c. 1736
Black and white chalk, and graphite, on faded blue paper

One of a handful of portraits by Meissonnier, this drawing was probably intended to illustrate a celebratory commemoration of the baron de Besenval, who was a distinguished soldier and diplomat. Besenval was in charge of one of the most elite French regiments, whose particular duty was to guard the sovereign and his family. In Meissonnier's drawing, objects declare Besenval's military prestige – a helmet, shield, sword and a commander's baton. The artist used different marks of white chalk on the (originally) blue paper to suggest the softness of skin, the colder sheen of metal and the hint of linen at the neck.

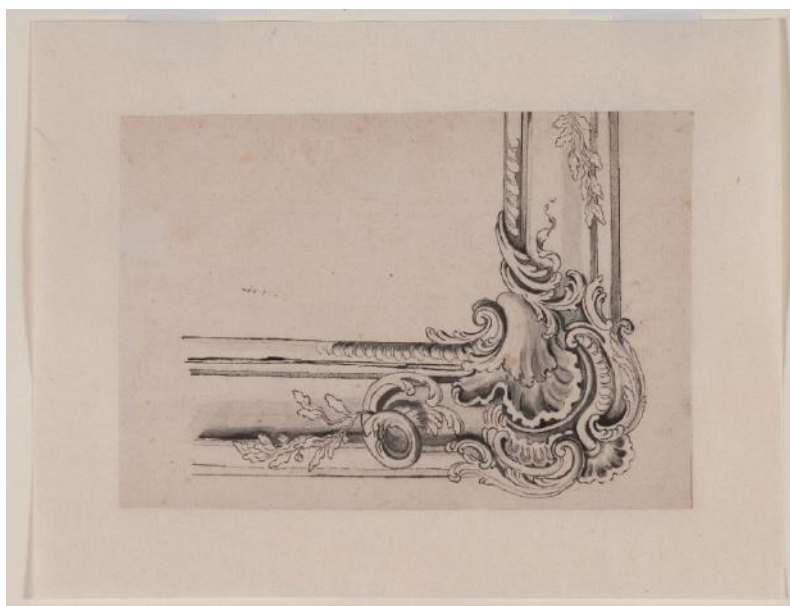
Acc. no. 1360



Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)
Design for the chased lid of a gold box, c. 1732-3
Pen, ink and wash, and black chalk, on paper

Trained as a goldsmith, Meissonnier was a brilliant and innovative designer of metalwork. Despite the small scale of the box lid for which this design was intended, the artist creates fantastical and illusionistic architectural space. The choice of ink wash amplifies the sense of fluidity in the composition, from the c-scrolls, curves and counter-curves to be realized in shining silver or gold, to the falling water on the left.

Acc. no. 1363



After Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)

Design for a rocaille frame, 1762

Pen and grey wash on paper

This drawing is a copy of an engraving (illustrated) after Meissonnier's design of 1728-30 for the frame of the painting *Louis XV hunting the stag in the forest of Saint Germain* (1730; illustrated).

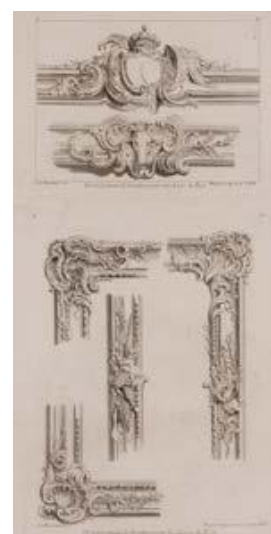


Jean-Baptiste Oudry, *Louis XV hunting deer in the forest of Saint-Germain*, 1730; Musée des Augustins.

Photo © RMN / Daniel Arnaudet / Gérard Blot.

The frame was decorated with hunting trophies, to match the subject of the painting, but this drawing concentrates on the exuberant *rocaille*-style decoration of one corner. Forms derived from shells merge with leafy curves, counter-curves and tendrils. Meissonnier's design interlocks concave and convex surfaces and combines naturalistic and abstracted elements.

Engraving by Gabriel Huquier in *Oeuvre de Juste Aurelle Meissonnier*, 1723-1735; Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (The National Trust), Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957; acc. no. 3227. Photo: Mike Fear © The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor.



Acc. no. 1362



Gabriel Huquier (1695-1772) after Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)
Design for the lid of a gold box, c. 1733-4
Red chalk on paper

This design for the lid of a chased gold box was engraved by Gabriel Huquier (1695-1772) and this drawing is almost certainly Huquier's copy of Meissonnier's original ink drawing (illustrated). One can imagine how the sun's rays, represented by the only straight lines in the design, would have shimmered when translated into metal.



Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier, *Design for an Ornament Panel*, 1733-34;
pen and brown and black ink, black chalk, brush and yellow, pale
green, grey, and brown washes on white laid paper; 397 x 502 x
25mm; Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; acc. no. 1911-
28-215. Image © Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

Acc. no. 1361



After Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)

Design for the High Altar of the church of Saint-Leu-Saint-Gilles, Paris, 1728

Pen, ink and wash, watercolour and graphite on paper, with incised structural lines (border: etching, pen and ink and watercolour)

In 1727, the essentially Gothic church of Saint-Leu-Saint-Gilles was modernized by the architect Pierre-François Godeau (d. 1762). It was given a plaster ceiling in imitation of fourteenth-century work, whitewashed and decorated with new woodwork and sculpture. This is one of two drawings at Waddesdon (both on display) in which Meissonnier proposed the design of a new High Altar. Flat surfaces are clad with pictorial panels. The altar merges with the window behind, which is painted to give the illusion of rays of light bursting out from the putti-filled clouds.

Acc. no. 1357



Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750)

Design for the High Altar of the church of Saint-Aignan, Orleans, 1728

Pen, ink and wash, watercolour, bodycolour and black chalk on paper, with an incised grid (border: pen and ink, watercolour and gold leaf)

This drawing envisages a particularly splendid altar, with much gilded embellishment, surmounted by a reliquary casket and dramatic sunburst. The blind-stamped 'G', visible on the bottom right-hand corner of the drawing is the mark of Jean-Baptiste Glomy (d. c. 1786), one of the leading mount-makers in Paris at a time when drawings enjoyed new prestige among collectors and who created the elegant green and gold surround.

Acc. no. 1358

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London and the Victoria and Albert Museum for their generous loans. This exhibition draws heavily upon the catalogue entries by Alastair Laing, Martin Meade and Michael Snodin in Alastair Laing et al., *The James A. de Rothschild Bequest at Waddesdon Manor, The National Trust: Drawings for Architecture, Design and Ornament* (Aylesbury, 2006). The curator particularly wishes to thank Jean-François Bédard for generously giving access to his Ph.D. thesis on Oppenord. Thanks to Emma Gilliland, Rachel Jacobs and Lindsay MacNaughton for help in the preparation of the exhibition.