

THE
ARIZONA
PORTFOLIO

LA MUSE DE GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE (The Muse of Guillaume Apollinaire)

Marie Laurencin (1885-1956), the painter and mistress of Guillaume Apollinaire, is the subject of this painting by the early twentieth century naïve painter, Henri Rousseau. The title of the work is derived from two double portraits Rousseau completed in 1909 of Apollinaire and Laurencin, *Le poète et sa muse*, in which Laurencin, dressed in a long pleated, blue robe and flowery wreath, acts as a muse of inspiration. The Phoenix Art Museum's painting, also from 1909, is most likely a tribute by Rousseau to Laurencin's artistic genius. She is receiving inspiration from a blond angelic figure at the right, identical to the figure of Liberty in Rousseau's 1906 *Liberty* inviting the Artists to the Twenty-second Exhibition of the Independents (Private Collection, Zurich). The Phoenix Art Museum work must have been painted after the first version of *Le poète et sa muse* and possibly after the second version because of the symbolic attributes for artistic genius.

In 1909 Apollinaire, one of the few individuals to be attracted to Rousseau's "primitive" style, commissioned the artist to execute his portrait. Rousseau worked diligently and sent Apollinaire a flood of letters pleading for adequate sittings and for some advance payment. Rousseau was displeased with the finished work, the first version of *Le poète et sa muse* (Pushkin Museum, Moscow, 131 x 97 cm.), and he

immediately began the second version (Kunstmuseum, Basle, 147 x 97 cm.). It is the latter version which Rousseau exhibited at the Salon des Independents in 1909. Both paintings are in most points identical except for the wreath on Laurencin's head, her gesture of inspiration, and the type of flower in the foreground. In the first version Rousseau had painted gillyflowers. Rousseau rejected the painting because he thought the gillyflowers inappropriate for his subject. In the second version he substituted *l'oeillet de poète*, poet's carnation or sweet william. Rousseau decorated the foreground of the Phoenix Art Museum painting with the small and delicate blooms of the poet's carnation. The inclusion of this row of flowers in *La muse de Guillaume Apollinaire* is an intentional symbolic reference to the missing poet and suggests that the Phoenix Art Museum work was painted after the first version of *Le poète et sa muse*.

Rousseau writes proudly at this time of his invention of the "portrait paysage," the portrait landscape. Rousseau's landscapes are not merely decorative backdrops for his figural studies but meticulously described visions. The lack of atmosphere and the strangely sensuous silhouettes of foliage and figures produce a magical sensation. The Phoenix painting differs from the two double portraits in that the depiction of the landscape space is deep. The two stylized trees which enframe the figure in the Phoenix painting

are similar to those found in the double portraits, particularly the second version. Rousseau often reuses motifs, not out of lack of inventiveness but because every detail is charged with special meaning to him.

If Rousseau's landscapes are haunting they are no less compelling than his portraits. Marie Laurencin is seen frontally, dressed in severe black, holding a small bouquet, the favored formula used by this artist for his female portraits. Laurencin's rigid pose and penetrating gaze recall Picasso's remarks about the first work he purchased of Rousseau's Mlle. M., which he found in Père Soulier's junk shop in 1908. Picasso genuinely admired the primitive clarity and directness of Rousseau's vision. He writes:

Rousseau was not an accident. He represents the perfection of the central order of thought. The first work of his I happened to acquire produced an astonishing effect on me. . . . It is one of the most beautiful of all French psychological portraits.

Though we may perhaps take issue with the suggestion that Rousseau's portraits are penetrating psychological studies, like the works of Degas or Picasso's own portraits, there is no denying the powerful impression produced by his enigmatical and immovable personages. We know from letters that for the double portrait Rousseau took elaborate

measurements of Apollinaire's features; this procedure may have been employed for his interpretation of Marie Laurencin as well. Apollinaire was shocked with the portrait and reportedly very displeased with those who, upon viewing Rousseau's *Le poète et sa muse*, recognized him. Marie Laurencin may have been equally surprised at her painted visage. Her slight frame and delicate features, noted by such contemporaries as Gertrude Stein and Picasso's mistress, Fernande Olivier, are not to be seen. The broad, impassive face of the Phoenix painting is similar to all of Rousseau's portraits of women. La muse de Guillaume Apollinaire and the two double portraits which most likely precede it, confirm Rousseau's unusual approach to portrait painting. The quiet figures who stand in a strangely mute world are visionary tributes to those he loved and respected.

Anthony Lacy Gully

La Muse de Guillaume Apollinaire

BY HENRI ROUSSEAU

*Phoenix Art Museum
Accession Number 62-101
Gift of Clare Boothe Luce
60.9 cm. x 38.7 cm.
oil on canvas*



WILD GEESE, FLOWERING PLANTS, AND TALL REEDS

The subject is wild geese and their habitat. The season is predictably autumn. The style is courtly and elegant. Thus one may describe the impressive chung-t'ang (a large scroll for a reception hall) in the Phoenix Art Museum Collection, which is unquestionably one of the finest paintings in this genre from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

In the painting, three wild geese rest on the bank of a river. At least two of them are aware of the descent, from the top right, of another, whose wings are spread, neck stretched, and feet readied for landing. Behind them, to the left, is a cluster of tall reeds, through which flowering peonies can be seen. The autumnal mood is pervasive, not only because the theme of migrating wild geese traditionally lends itself to seasonal evocation; but the withering tips of the leaves of the reeds, the timely bloom of the flowers, and the interspersing of brownish hues amidst greens are equally telling. In this respect, even the tone of the silk, now mellowed to a rich shade of gold, is ideal as a backdrop.

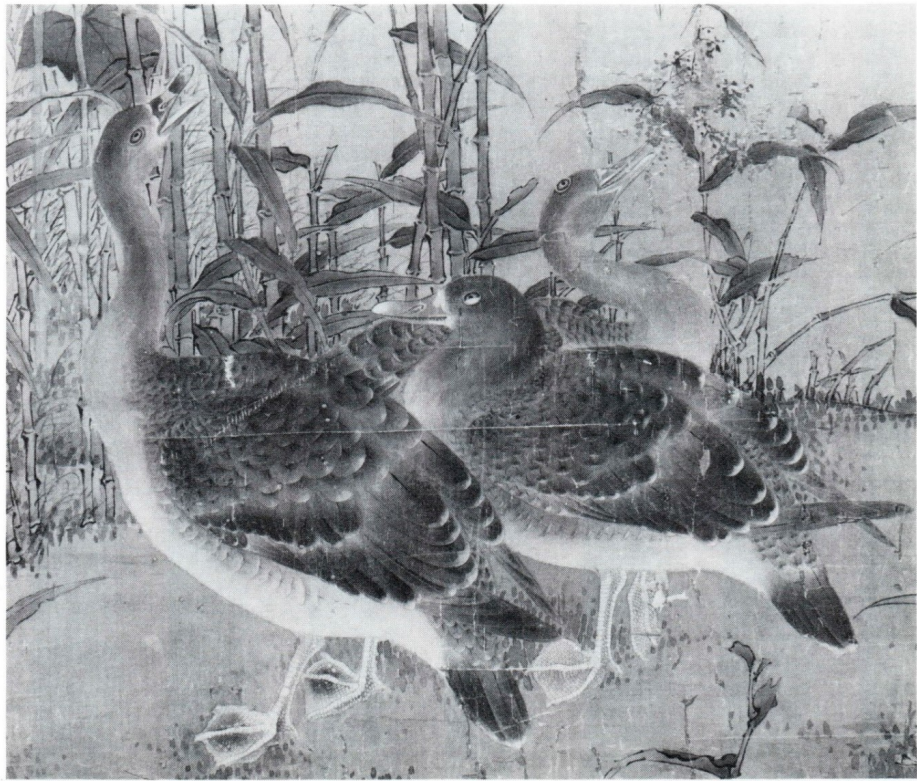
The composition itself is masterly. Between plants and plants, birds and birds, and birds and plants, the interplay is intricate and subtle. Its stately rhythm, taut orchestration and counterpoint indicate the hand of a master. So do the ever-varying brushstrokes, which can be incisive and steely at one moment, then soften to undulating waves at another. It is noteworthy to mention that its

sonorous and crystal tone is unlike the misty banality into which Ming treatment of this genre frequently — and unfortunately — falls. Remarkable, too, is the condition of this painting which, in spite of its nearly four hundred year existence, has not suffered much loss. Even the retouching has been minimal and self-effacing.

In view of the size, quality and condition of the work, one cannot help but lament the absence of a signature that could link it unequivocally to a known artist. The Phoenix Art Museum staff has attributed it to Lin Liang (active 1455-1500), but the stylistic framework and refined brushstrokes tend to point to his equally renowned contemporary, that is, Lü Chi.

Lü Chi was active around 1500 and enjoyed the patronage of the Ming Emperor, Hung-chih (1488-1506). He was a prolific painter and the probable head of an atelier. Works attributed to Lü Chi are often divergent in style and uneven in quality. The Phoenix Art Museum chung-t'ang, however, can be compared to the very best of them and it may well be a prime example of either the hand of Lü Chi or of his school.

Ju-hsi Chou



WILD GEESE, FLOWERING PLANTS, AND
TALL REEDS

Anonymous, Ming Dynasty

*Phoenix Art Museum
Accession Number 58-100
Gift of Elsie Sackler
204.8 cm. x 107.2 cm.
ink and color on silk*



TING

The "savage elegance" of the ting, formerly on loan to the Phoenix Art Museum, presents another aspect of ancient Chinese art. The ting is a key vessel in the ancient rituals of the Shang and Chou periods (respectively 1523-1027 B.C., and 1027-256 B.C.), where offerings and libations were made to ancestors and deities. The ting was a food container.

The style is mature Shang, around eleventh century B.C., and its origin has been suspected to be the capital city of An-yang. Like most of the tings with this provenance, the form of the vessel is strong and simple, whereas the decor is complex and zoomorphic. The usual configurations are present: marked by strong axial flanges, treated in high relief and backed by the meandering lei-wen (thundercloud pattern), the t'ao-t'ieh or the "glutton mask" takes on a classic, menacing appearance. Indeed, so well integrated is the mask with the vessel that, when viewed from the proper angle, the former virtually transformed the latter into a living, mysterious organism.

As a matter of fact, of this particular ting, it is the very t'ao-t'ieh itself that proves to be the most interesting. Unlike the majority of t'ao-t'iehs, its horns metamorphose into a pair of fantastic animals which evoke aquatic associations. In addition, the motif of the pointed ear, which is common, is extended to the treatment of the aquatic creatures, which is uncommon.

In short, if it has been attested time and again that each Shang ritual vessel is individually conceived while falling into a generic pattern, the ting in the Henry Luce III Collection is but one more confirmation.

Ju-hsi Chou



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TING

Shang Dynasty

Henry Luce III Collection

H: 25 cm.; d. 19.23 cm.

Bronze



HOMAGE TO WATTEAU

In March, 1860 upon a return visit from Rome to his native city of Valenciennes, the French sculptor Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875) began to formulate plans for a monument to commemorate the genius of the city's most illustrious artist, the eighteenth-century painter, Antoine Watteau. In an extant letter to the mayor, M. Bracq, Carpeaux offered to erect the monument at his own expense, asking only for the cost of the necessary bronze. The commission was granted, and for the next fifteen years until his death, Carpeaux worked on the project. It was realized in three versions: the Phoenix Art Museum model reveals the artist's final conception.

Carpeaux's first project, completed sometime before the spring of 1860, took the form of an isolated figure of Watteau. Carpeaux then favored marble for the monument and insisted that the work be placed in the center of the city's La Grande Place. These demands resulted in frequent disputes between the artist and members of the Municipal Council. A second version was completed in 1867. According to the memoirs of Carpeaux's daughter, the second version was based on a now lost pastel portrait of Watteau. A model of this version exists in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes. It stands 27 cm. high and shows Watteau, palette in hand, surrounded by attributes of the Commedia dell'Arte.

Although Carpeaux exhibited in 1870 a statue of Watteau based on the 1867 version, he seems to have simultaneously realized that the isolated figure of Watteau would be completely overpowered by the monument's future location; the Municipal Council was adamant that the work was to be placed against a building at the extremity of La Grande Place. Thus, Carpeaux amplified his conception. The image of Watteau now surmounted a two-tiered fountain designed in Louis XV style. The double pedestal was adorned with four figures from the Commedia dell'Arte, and they in turn were reflected in a white marble basin in which swans, the symbol of Valenciennes, were depicted as well. The panels on this lower tier were decorated with bas-relief designs based on paintings by Watteau.

Representative of this third, and final, design is the Phoenix Art Museum's Homage to Watteau. The attribution of the Phoenix cast, distinguished by its mold markings, is complicated by the fact that the completed monument was not dedicated until October 12, 1884, the bicentennial anniversary of Watteau's birth, nine years after the artist's death. The final project was carried out by the sculptor, Eugène Hiolle, and three architects appointed by the Municipal Council. According to Claude Souviron, curator of the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes, Hiolle executed

several casts from Carpeaux's original model of the fountain. Generally, Carpeaux worked from simplified designs in his models to final conceptions notable for their intricate detailing. Both the Phoenix Art Museum cast, and one in the Louvre, are distinguished by their relative simplicity, and are stylistically related to the artist's first conception of the third version; they are unlike the more involved surface incisions and modelling on the pedestals of a third model in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes. Moreover, the Phoenix and Louvre versions are dominated by the figure of Watteau, which was ultimately cast from Carpeaux's 1870 statue, and neither the Phoenix nor Louvre versions exhibit the complexities of the figures on the lower registers as completed by Hiolle.

Whether the Phoenix Art Museum version was cast by Carpeaux, his atelier or Hiolle is hardly relevant, since Carpeaux, like so many nineteenth-century sculptors, produced multiple versions and editions of his major projects. The delicate, almost rococo, plaster cast in the Phoenix Art Museum beautifully exemplifies Carpeaux's style at its best, and serves as a poetic tribute to his fellow countryman, Antoine Watteau.

Robin Dowden

Homage to Watteau

ATTRIBUTED TO
JEAN-BAPTISTE CARPEAUX

*Phoenix Art Museum
Accession Number 64-79
Gift of F. M. Hinkhouse
H.: 76.92 cm.
Plaster*



