

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM

FINE ARTS

LAURENT PÉCHEUX

Lyon 1729 - Turin 1821

French school

REGULUS LEAVING HIS FAMILY TO RETURN TO CARTHAGE

Oil on canvas
H. 0,49 m; W.0,62 m

DATE: 1757-1761

PROVENANCE:

Jean-François Leroy de Senneville (1715-1784), a collector of contemporary French painting, but also of paintings from Italy and Flanders. Secrétaire du Roi (1752-1780) and Fermier Général (1772-1780). Commissioned the construction of the Hôtel Le Roy de Senneville, rue Royale, in 1769.

His sale in the Grande Salle of the Hôtel de Bullion, Rue Platrière, Paris, 11 April 1780, expert A. J. Paillet, commissaire-priseur A. C. Chariot, n° 24: "*Le Pecheux, Régulus quittant sa famille dont il est environné, pour se rendre à Carthage où il s'étoit engagé de retourner sur sa parole. Ce morceau réunit à la noblesse de la composition, le caractere et l'expression inséparables du genre de l'Histoire. Plusieurs personnes ont été jusqu'à présent persuadées que ce Tableau étoit de Mr Greuze, qui n'en désavoueroit pas le mérite; mais des informations plus justes nous ont instruit qu'il étoit original de Mr le Pecheux. Il est donc juste d'en laisser l'honneur à son véritable auteur. Peinture. Sur toile. Largeur vingt et un pouces. Hauteur de dix-huit (env. 48 sur 56 cm; la largeur est en réalité 23 pouces)* [Le Pecheux, Regulus leaving his family by whom he is surrounded, to go to Carthage where he had made a commitment on oath to return. This piece adds to the nobility of the composition, the inseparable character and expression of the genre of History. Several figures have until now been persuaded that this painting was by Mr Greuze, who would not disavow its merit; but more accurate information instructs us that it was an original by Mr le Pecheux. It is therefore correct to leave the honour for it to its true author. Painting. On canvas. Width twenty one *pouces*,. Height of eighteen (ca. 48 x 56 cm; the width is in reality 23 *pouces*]]» (N° Lugt 3116) (most of the lots were not sold and were re-auctioned on 26 April 1784);

Sale on the premises, in his house, Rue Royale, Place de Louis XV, Paris, 24 April 1784, expert A.J. Paillet, commissaire-priseur Commandeur, n° 3 : "le Pecheux, Régulus, quittant sa famille dont il est environné, pour se rendre à Carthage où il s'étoit engagé à retourner sur sa parole. Ce morceau réunit à la nobless de la composition, le caractère & l'expression inséparables du genre de l'histoire; il est regardé comme un des meilleurs ouvrages de ce Peintre; on y joindra la gravure lors de la vente. Peinture. Hauteur 18 pouces, largeur 21. (N° Lugt 3716) Le Pecheux, Regulus leaving his family by whom he is surrounded, to go to Carthage where he had made a commitment on his word to return. This piece adds to the nobility of the composition, the inseparable character and expression of the genre of history; it is considered to be one of the

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best works of this Painter; the print of it will be added for the sale. Painting, Height 18 *pouces* width 21]” Sold for 341 livres;

Acquired at this sale by Antoine-Charles Dulac (1729-1811), picture dealer, master painter and gilder on wood, jewellery dealer;

Private collection, Belgium

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Sylvain Laveissière, exh. cat. *Laurent Pécheux. Un peintre français dans l'Italie des Lumières*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dole, 27 June - 30 September 2012, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Chambéry, 24 October 2012 - 20 January 2013, p. 87 et p. 89: our sketch is mentioned as lost, with a possible appearance in a sale in 1780.

RELATED WORKS:

Our painting is a preparatory sketch for a painting commissioned in 1757 by the architect Robert Adam for his client Lord Hope, Earl of Hopetoun, for Hopetoun House near Edinburgh, Scotland. The final painting (which measured about H. 1,22 m; W. 0,95 m) has not been found, nor has its pendant *Coriolanus*.

Two preparatory drawings are in the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Lyon and of Dijon.

A print published in 1772 by Antoine de Marcenay de Ghuy, based on a painting created by the engraver after a sketch (possibly our painting).



Laurent Pécheux, *Regulus leaving his family to return to Carthage*, pen and black ink, grey wash on beige paper, H. 375 mm; W. 479 mm, Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts



Laurent Pécheux, *Regulus leaving his family to return to Carthage*, pen, grey wash, white gouache highlights on beige prepared paper, H. 314 mm; W. 424 mm, Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts

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Antoine de Marcenay de Ghuy, after Laurent Pécheux,
Regulus leaving his family to return to Carthage, 1772.

Originally from Lyon, Laurent Pécheux spent most of his career in Italy, first in Rome and then in Turin where he became the official painter to the King of Piedmont-Sardinia. Pécheux is considered to be one of the pioneers of European Neoclassicism. The present sketch, dated about 1757-1761, is in fact extremely early in the Neoclassical movement.

In 2012, a first retrospective was devoted to Laurent Pécheux by the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Dole and then shown at Chambéry. Research by Mr. Sylvain Laveissière, who curated the exhibition has brought this leading artist out from the shadows.

Pécheux trained in Lyon and Paris where he spent a year in the studio of Charles Natoire. After his arrival in Rome in 1753, the painter became familiar with this active artistic centre. The two most fashionable painters in 18th century Rome were Anton Raphaël Mengs (1728-1779) and Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787), the essential portraitist for the young lords on their Grand Tour of Europe. Pécheux from early on came into close contact with both of these eminent painters: Mengs who advised him, and Batoni with whom he was associated for some commissions. Pécheux asserted himself as one of the most accomplished representatives of Roman history painting when neoclassicism was developing.

Laurent Pécheux enjoyed an exceptionally rich career. Admitted to the prestigious Academy of Saint Luke in 1762, he was called to Parma in 1765 to paint the portrait of the future Queen of Spain with success. The most important Roman families asked him to paint the ceilings of their palaces (Borghese, Barberini). He worked for French connoisseurs, for the Grand Master of the Order of Malta, the pope, Pius VI as well as for Catherine the Great. In 1777, he left Rome for Turin, where the king of Piedmont-Sardinia, Victor Emmanuel III, had selected him as first painter and director of an Academy that had fallen into sluggishness. His activity as a court painter, which led him to decorate the royal palace of Turin, did not prevent him from working for private commissions such as the ceiling of the Gladiator room in the Villa Borghese in Rome, the decoration of which is the most famous decorative painting project of the time.

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Our painting comes from a prestigious commission that Pécheux received through the architect, Robert Adam in 1757. The artist was asked to paint two pendants, for Lord Hope's country house near Edinburgh. These two paintings had classical subjects celebrating virtue: *Regulus leaving his family to return to Carthage* and *Coriolanus*. Delivered before 1761, these two paintings are now known only from preparatory studies and prints.

A Roman general, Regulus was imprisoned by the Carthaginians in 256 B.C. during the first Punic War. As a captive he was sent to Rome, to suggest to the Senate that it exchange him for a large number of Carthaginians. He left under oath, undertaking to return and be placed under the irons if the offer was not accepted. Regulus urged his compatriots to refuse peace under the enemy's conditions and resisted the supplications of his friends and his family's tears. Despite the prayers of his wife Marcia and their two children, he returned to Carthage where he was tortured. According to Horace (*Odes*, book III, poem V, 40-44), Regulus "set aside his wife's chaste kisses, and his little ones, as of less importance, and, grimly, he set his manly face to the soil...."