

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM  
FINE ARTS

**ANNE-LOUIS GIRODET**

Montargis 1767 - Paris 1824  
French School

**MARIE-FRANÇOISE CLAUDINE BOCQUET NÉE TRICARD,  
IN A GREEN SHAWL**

Oil on canvas  
H. 0,65 m; W. 0,55 m  
Monogrammed and dated lower left: *ALGDR 1804*

DATE: 1804

**PROVENANCE :**

Collection of Marie-Françoise Claudine Merlin, widow of Bocquet (1753-1816), Paris.  
By inheritance, her daughter, Augustine Boquet, married name Bertin de Vaux (1780-1849), Paris and château de Grand'Maisons called de Villepreux, Villepreux.  
By inheritance, collections of Bertin de Vaux, Gérard de Rayneval, Le Gouz de Saint-Seine, château de Grand'Maisons called de Villepreux, Salon Bertin de Vaux (Blue Salon), Villepreux.  
Sale, château de Villepreux, the Bertin de Veau residence, Paris, Lasseron, November 8th, 2016, lot 40.

**BIBLIOGRAPHIE :**

Sylvain BELLENGER (dir.), *Girodet (1767-1824)*, exh. cat. Paris, Louvre Museum, 2005, p. 417 (confusion with the portrait of 1808).

Pierre-Alexandre COUPIN, *Œuvres posthumes de Girodet-Trioson suivies de sa correspondance, précédées d'une notice historique*, Paris, Jules Renouard, 1829, v. I, ("Madame Merlin ; deux portraits différents." situés en 1812).

Stephanie NEVISON BROWN, *Girodet: a contradictory career*, Ph. D. Dissertation, Courtauld Institute of Art, London University, 1980, p. 225 (confused with the portrait of Mme Chabanis).

Aude LAMORELLE, *Portraits féminins peints par Girodet*, Master, University of Paris Nanterre, 2002, v. I.

*La tête est d'une beauté ravissante, et ce qui me séduit le plus en elle, c'est qu'il me semble qu'on peut se flatter de la rencontrer. Il n'y a rien là qui soit idéal ou mythologique ; ce n'est pas non plus une figure grecque, romaine ou babylonienne ; c'est une beauté bien simple, bien naturelle, bien vraie, qui peut appartenir à tous les pays, à tous les siècles, et qu'on chercherait de préférence à Paris.*

*Mercure de France*, 1800 (à propos du portrait de Mme de Bonneval par Girodet)  
("The head is ravishingly beautiful and what pleases me the most about it is that it seems that one could be flattered to meet her. There isn't anything there which is idealized or mythological; it is not a Greek, Roman, or Babylonian figure either; it is

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quite simply beauty, really natural, quite true, which could belong to every country, every century, and which one would preferably seek in Paris.”)

*Mercur de France*, 1800 (concerning Girodet's *Portrait of Mme. de Bonneval*)

From a well off Parisian family, Marie-Françoise Claudine Tricard was the daughter of Pierre Tricard (died in Montrouge in 1798) and the sister of Louis Tricard, cash controller at the Postal Administration. She was otherwise related to the notary Jacques Tricard (1754-1828). In about 1775, the young woman married Louis Michel Bocquet or Boquet, a bourgeois from Paris. The couple lived in the capital, but owned a country house with a large garden in Meudon which had possibly been acquired to escape the troubles of the times. The Bocquets retired there during the years of riots and insecurity.

A certain stability during the Directorate made it possible for them to return to Paris, and also, in February 1798, to buy the Grand'Maisons farm on the property of the former royal Seignior of Villepreux. Although, as with a good number of important bourgeoisie at the time, the couple only were then seeking to place their money, the charm of the place led them to decide to conserve the domain and then enlarge it. Madame Bocquet began thus to acquire the Dauphin wood grove, called the Saint Fiacre wood, in 1803, and reconstructed the farmer's residence.

A widow in 1807, she was married again, this time to Thomas Jean Baptiste Merlin, formerly a tax collector for the estates and forests in the district of Alençon, and since the Revolution, a money changing agent, a close friend of the Bocquets and god father of their oldest daughter, Augustine. Mr. Merlin had a sizeable fortune, owned a large farm near Coulommiers, and a house in Paris. In 1811, persuaded by his wife, he acquired the Château called “de Villepreux” (de Grand'maisons) and its park at public auction. Separated from its land in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was the property of the architect Jean-François Heurtier who had acquired it from Louis XVI just before the Revolution, and then of the speculator and banker, Pierre-Jacques Dubois. The château, though, was only a sparsely furnished summer residence for the Merlins. The couple usually lived in Paris in the apartment building on the rue Louis-le-Grand. Here is where Marie-Françoise Claudine died in 1816 at the age of sixty-three.

After her death, Mr. Merlin completed the domain by purchasing the neighboring Mézus' farm. He died at Villepreux in 1826 and left all his possessions to his god daughter, Augustine Bocquet. She married Louis François Bertin de Veaux, one of the most important politicians at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Director, with his brother, of the *Journal des Débats*. Their granddaughter and heiress Louise Bertin de Veaux, very early the widow of Count Alphonse Gérard de Rayneval, was equally deeply attached to Villepreux. After her father's death in 1879, she devoted herself to restoring and embellishing the château which had suffered during the Franco-Prussian War. This work was continued by her descendants, especially her great-granddaughter, Simone de Saint-Seine, and the son of the latter, Luc de Saint-Seine.

Thus the château of Grand'Maison brought together the souvenirs of the 19th century grand families of Berin de Veaux, the Raynevals, as well as the Saint-Seines, the last owners of the place, and the Bocquet-Merlins, the first purchasers. The residence mainly sheltered a gallery of the most remarkable portraits. Those concerning the Empire period were realized by David's most famous students: Drölling, Delécluze, Schnetz, Laneuville, and especially Girodet whose work corresponded the best to the aesthetic ideal, the literary sophistication,

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and refinement of the château owners. Five of his pictures are conserved which depict only members of the Bocquet-Merlin family, including M. Merlin, his goddaughter Augustine, and his spouse Marie-Françoise Claudine Tricard.

As opposed to Mr. Merlin who sat for the artist only in 1822, the women commissioned their portraits much earlier: Augustine in 1806 and 1809, and her mother in 1804, still as Mme. Bocquet, and in 1810 as Mme. Merlin (*ill.1*). Marie-Françoise Christine Tricard seems thus to have been the first to turn to Girodet, whom she probably knew through Etienne-Jean Delécluze. During the Terror, the Delécluze family withdrew to Meudon in a house near the Bocquets', and a friendship grew up between the neighbors. Girodet also frequented the Bertins and the literary salon run by Augustine which served as editorial meetings for the *Journal des débats*. Between 1811 and 1815, this salon was held at Madame Merlin's: it may be in this period that the artist drew her "sick, reclining on a lounge chair" (location unknown, cited by Coupin).



Ill. 1. Anne-Louis Girodet de Roucy-Trioson, *Marie-Françoise Christine Tricard Merlin, in a Yellow Shawl*, 1810, monogrammed and dated, oil on canvas, 66.5 x 56 cm, private collection.



Ill. 2. *Costume d'un Jeune Dame à la Campagne*. *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, September 15th, 1806, engraving 752.

Girodet's long relationship with the Bocquet-Merlin and Bertin de Veaux families probably started with Madame Bocquet's portrait produced in 1804. Almost fifty years old, but with radiant beauty, the lady poses with refined simplicity and without wearing any jewelry. She is clothed in a white walking dress which has a low neckline and is held with an ivory sash. The whiteness of her costume and complexion is emphasized by a sumptuous Cachemere shawl made of green wool with a fine border of red flowers which are echoed in the lady's brown gaze. Madame Bocquet's brown hair is pulled back into a high bun which allows delicate curls to escape to be cleverly placed "à l'antique" around the face and

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multiplied by fine projected shadows. The entire outfit, despite its apparent simplicity, conforms to the latest taste of the day: almost identical attire can be seen in the September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1806 edition of the famous *Journal des Dames et des Modes* under the title “Parisian Costume. Costume of a Young Lady in the Countryside” (*Costume Parisien. Costume d’une (sic) jeune Dame à la Campagne*) (ill. 2).

The dress’ high waist emphasizes both the full curves of Madame Bocquet who possesses the natural sensuality of Parisians during the First Empire and the classic geometry, dear to Girodet, of her body: the oval face and rounded bosom, as well as the perfect evenness of the neck and throat. Her skin, however, does not at all resemble an ancient marble, because Girodet excelled in the depiction of feminine flesh which he celebrated with his supreme art of glazes. The critic of the 1800 Salon already admired the artist’s *maestria* in the portrait of Madame de Bonneval (oil on canvas, 105 x 80 cm. private collection):

“the flesh is painted with seductive verity, and it is flesh, as Diderot so strongly remarked, it is unctuous white, even, without being pale or mat; it is an imperceptible mix of red and blue which imperceptibly transpires; it is blood, it is life, which constitute the despair of colorists.”<sup>1</sup>

One could apply this elogy word for word to our portrait and only add the soft pink which brushes Madame Bocquet’s cheeks, lips, and earlobe, and warms the shadows under the strands of hair.



Ill. 3. Anne-Louis Girodet de Roucy-Trioson, *Charlotte-Félicité Groucy, madame Chabanis*, 1804, monogrammed and dated, oil on canvas, Northampton (Mass.), Smith College Museum of Art, inv. SC 1956:19.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mercur de France*, frimaire an IX (1800), v. XXII, n° 633, vol. 2, p. 363.

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However, our picture's charm really comes from the synthesis of a still static presentation inherited from the *Ancien Régime*, and a romantic melancholy from Chateaubriand, a close friend of Girodet and the Bertins. It suffices to compare our portrait with that of *Madame Chabanis*, also painted in 1804 and employing an almost identical overall composition (*ill. 3*) to notice to what extent Madame Bocquet's expression is changeable and alive, there where Madame Chabanis' expression is simply forthright and frozen. Our sitter's gaze is both interiorized, scrutinizing, mature, perspicacious, tender, and touched with emotion. And it is this same gaze which the artist would have the good fortune to find again in the more sophisticated portrait of his client and undoubtedly friend, even protector, whom he painted in 1810, two years after Marie-Françoise Claudine's second marriage to Mr. Merlin (*ill. 1*).