

# JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM

## FINE ARTS

### JEAN JOUVENET

Rouen 1649 - Paris 1717

French School

### VENUS VISITING THE FORGE OF VULCAN

Oil on canvas

H. 1,10 m; W. 0,85 m

DATE: c. 1699

#### PROVENANCE:

Laurent Grimod de La Reynière sale, supplement, 3 April 1793, no. 159, where the painting is described precisely (42 *pouces* by 32 *pouces*; H. 1,13 m; W. 0,86 m) and where the print is attributed to Duflos.

Sold for 1,210 *livres* to Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Le Brun at the La Reynière sale

Madame de Forestier Sale, Paris, 27 November 1816, no. 20, 42 *pouces* by 32 *pouces* 10 *lignes* (H. 1,13 m; W. 0,88 m), sold for 74 F. to Thomas Grignon

Private collection

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

F.-N. Leroy, *Histoire de Jouvenet*, Rouen and Paris, 1860, especially p. 279 (the painting shown at the Salon of 1699).

Gaëtan Guillot, "La femme et les filles du peintre Jouvenet dans l'œuvre du peintre", *Revue catholique de Normandie*, t. 24, July 1915, p. 305-313.

Antoine Schnapper, *Jean Jouvenet (1644-1717) et la peinture d'histoire à Paris*, Paris, 1974, p. 207-208, no. 95 (as lost but known from a print by L. Desplaces).

Antoine Schnapper, *Jean Jouvenet (1644-1717) et la peinture d'histoire à Paris. Edition complétée par Christine Gouzi*, Paris, 2010, p. 262-263, P.138 (95).

#### EXHIBITIONS:

Probably Salon of 1699 (*Liste des tableaux et des ouvrages de Sculpture, exposés dans la grande Gallerie du Louvre (...), en la présente année 1699*, p. 13), average sized upright painting (Fl. Le Comte, t. III, 1700, p. 256).

Possibly also Salon of 1704:<sup>1</sup> "Vénus qui engage Vulcain de faire des armes pour Enée [Venus who hires Vulcan to make arms for Aeneas]" (*Liste des tableaux...exposez dans la grande Gallerie du Louvre...en...1704*, p. 9.).

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<sup>1</sup> Four paintings exhibited by Jouvenet at the Salon of 1704 have the same titles as those he showed at the Salon of 1699. It was possible for the same painting to appear at two salons (this is the case for example for several works by the two Coypels and Louis de Boullogne. But Christine Gouzi reiterates that it is not certain that this applies to Jouvenet.

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### RELATED WORKS:

- Probably<sup>2</sup> print by Louis Desplaces (1682-1739) the letter of which states: *J. Jouvenet pinxit 1703*, see Marcel Roux and Edmond Pognon, *Inventaire du fonds français, graveurs du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1951, t. VII, p. 81.

- Ricordo, reduced size (Gouzi 2010, P.139), oil on canvas, H. 0,81 m; W. 0,65 m, sold Sotheby's New York, 18 October 2000, lot 175; Galerie Jean-François Heim in 2002; Christie's New York, 15 April 2008, lot 315; may correspond to the *ricordo*, oil on canvas, H. 0,78 m; W. 0,61 m, in the Montoya sale in Berlin on 16 April 1912 with an attribution to Antoine Coypel.

After personally examining this painting in 2002 Antoine Schnapper considered that this was a repetition by Jouvenet helped by his studio, a work of good quality partly by the master's hand. According to Christine Gouzi, "it is highly likely that this is the number exhibited at the Salon of 1704"<sup>3</sup>. The *ricordi* and copies referred to below could also have been created after this smaller repetition.

- *Ricordo* (by the studio), oil on canvas, H. 0,997 m; W. 0,803 m, sold by Christie's, New York, East, 16 June 1999, lot 108, as P.-J. Cazes.

- Copy, oil on canvas, H. 1,14 m; W. 0,94 m, Oslo, Nasjonalmuseet.<sup>4</sup>

- Copy in reverse, oil on canvas, H. 1,06 m; W. 0,80 m, sold in Paris, Hôtel Drouot, on 16 February 1981, lot 103, as attributed to Jean Restout.

- Copy in reverse, oil on canvas, H. 0,42 m; W. 0,35 m, sold by Christie's, London on 17 April 1997, lot 161 and in the same place on 5 December 1997, lot 83, as circle of Adrien van der Werff.

- Copy in reverse, oil on canvas, H. 0,84 m; W. 0,87 m (enlarged on the sides), sold in Paris, Palais d'Orsay, on 3 April 1979, lot 25, as attributed to Noël-Nicolas Coypel.

- Tapestry cartoon (free adaptation after Jouvenet), sold in Versailles on 23 May 1973, no. 188, as workshop of the Coypel family.

Oozing elegance and sensuality, Venus stands in front of her official husband, the god Vulcan. Virgil describes this scene in the *Aeneid*: Venus uses her charms to convince Vulcan to forge armour for her son Aeneas. The master of fire and protector of craftsmen, Vulcan is dressed as an artisan: he is wearing a round bonnet. Still sitting in front of his workbench, initially he hesitates on hearing his unfaithful wife, who preferred Mars to him. Suddenly, Vulcan is seized by amorous passion and promises to help Venus fully. Jouvenet shows Cupid, who has accompanied the goddess and is shooting an arrow at Vulcan. At the bottom of Desplaces's print, a canto of the *Aeneid* is quoted: *Sensit laeta dolis et formae conscia coniunx* [She, the joyful wife; felt what her beauty and her guile could do].<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This print may have been made after our painting or after a smaller ricordo, oil on canvas, H. 0,81 m; W. 0,65 m; Gouzi 2010, p. 263, P.139.

<sup>3</sup> Gouzi 2010, p. 263, P.139.

<sup>4</sup> <http://samling.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/object/NG.M.00334h#>

<sup>5</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, book VIII, 392.

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Print by Louis Desplaces (1682-1739) the letter states: *J. Jouvenet pinxit 1703*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes



Ricordo (partly autograph) in a reduced format, oil on canvas, H. 0,81 m; W. 0,65 m; Gouzi 2010, p. 263, P.139



Copy, oil on canvas, H. 1,14 m; W. 0,94 m, Oslo, Nasjonalmuseet

In 1974, when his monograph, *Jean Jouvenet (1644-1717) et la peinture d'histoire à Paris*<sup>6</sup> was published, Antoine Schnapper knew our painting only through the print by Desplaces and the numerous copies. He emphasized the vigour of the composition and its realist tone. Venus, Cupid, the unharnessed chariot, the structure of symbolic clouds of the gods are juxtaposed with the laborious world of Vulcan, whose assistants continue their work. The anvil, the hammers, the vice, Vulcan's workbench, the sleeping dog were all for Schnapper "elements of unusual density, without precedent in French painting since the *Le Nains*".<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the realism of the blacksmith is truly remarkable and provides a good example of the lively sense for the real perceptible in Jouvenet's entire painted oeuvre.

In 2010, Christine Gouzi produced a new edition of Antoine Schnapper's publication<sup>8</sup> and supplemented the entry on our painting, amongst others, of which she had only known the reduced *ricordo* until then. She considers its colours to be quite exceptional for Jouvenet's work. In fact, Venus is wearing mauve clothing that is particularly highly worked, which in her view may recall Titian's palette, who particularly liked this colour, or that of Veronese, who used it in variations of pink. She concluded that even if Jouvenet's corpus does not evoke the atmosphere of Venetian painting, Jouvenet was sufficiently attracted for it to inspire him on occasion. Other works show this influence according to Gouzi, especially the *Birth of Bacchus*, a painting commissioned in 1700 for the Château de Meudon (Gouzi 2010, P. 126).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This catalogue raisonné caused a great stir in 1974 because of the new distinctions between autograph repetitions, studio replicas, copies by followers and pastiches.

<sup>7</sup> Gouzi 2010, p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> The publication of a new edition of this fundamental book by Christine Gouzi in 2010 has left the original text intact as a tribute to the master, while also adding to it, by extending the entries and adding 29 new paintings (of a total of 146).

<sup>9</sup> Gouzi 2010, p. 263-264.

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In 1717, the year of Jouvenet's death, Jean Restout (1692-1768),<sup>10</sup> his nephew and pupil, paid tribute to his uncle by showing a painting of this same subject as his *Morceau d'Agrégation*.<sup>11</sup> Even if the composition is different, the print must have inspired him for the figures of Venus and Vulcan.



Louis de Boullogne (1654-1733), *Venus in Vulcan's Forge*, 1703, Salon of 1704, oil on canvas, H. 0,68 m; W. 0,58 m, Sceaux, Collection Milgrom



Jean Restout, *Venus in Vulcan's Forge*, 1717, oil on canvas, H. 1,02 m; W. 1,37 m, current location unknown



Louis Le Nain, *Venus in Vulcan's Forge*, 1641, oil on canvas, H. 1,50 m; W. 1,20 m, Reims, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Our painting was probably shown at the Salon of 1699, possibly also at the Salon of 1704. These two successive Salons, which were held in the Galerie of the Louvre were part of a series of exhibitions that were organized sporadically by the Académie Royale from 1667.<sup>12</sup> Around 1700, Jean Jouvenet was at the peak of his career. With Charles de La Fosse, Antoine Coypel and the Boullogne brothers, he was one of the painters of his time who enjoyed the most success. In 1707, Jouvenet accessed the most prestigious positions within the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture and became one of its four rectors. Jouvenet was rather unusual compared to his contemporaries in that from 1685, he concentrated essentially on religious painting, an area in which he played a significant part. According to Christine Gouzi, Jouvenet's work should be seen as proof of a religious renewal at the end of Louis XIV's reign.<sup>13</sup>

Originally from Rouen, Jouvenet moved to Paris at the age of seventeen. Noticed by Charles le Brun, Jouvenet quickly joined his team of painter decorators of the royal residences: Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the Tuileries and Versailles. His association with le Brun marked Jouvenet all his life. It is through his contact with the older painter that he was able to develop his greatest quality as an artist: his ability to create impressive compositions, while inciting feeling in the spectator with the figures' poses and their emotions. Jouvenet's painted oeuvre

<sup>10</sup> Christine Gouzi, *Jean Restout (1692-1768), peintre d'histoire à Paris*, Paris, 2000, p. 196, P.5 (colour reproduction p. 20).

<sup>11</sup> Jean Restout, *Venus in Vulcan's Forge*, 1717, oil on canvas, H. 1,02 m; W. 1,37 m, current location unknown.

<sup>12</sup> The term "Salon" was adopted only in 1725 when the Academicians exhibited their works in the Louvre's Salon Carré.

<sup>13</sup> Gouzi 2010, p. 10.

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remains strongly attached to the classical tradition and shows that there is continuity in grand history painting in France between Le Brun and David. Jouvenet's enormous success is confirmed by the many copies and prints that circulated until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Dr Gouzi emphasized the infatuation for Jouvenet's art among connoisseurs of the 1780s, which helps to understand his aura in neoclassical and then romantic artistic literature. At that time, our painting was in the collection of the Fermier Général Laurent Grimod de La Reynière (1734-1793), before passing to the famous dealer and collector Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun (1748-1813).