

Two Pastels by Vigée Le Brun Pre-empted by the Louvre

23/3/14 – **Acquisitions – Paris, Musée du Louvre** – The Département des Arts Graphiques at the Musée du Louvre this afternoon pre-empted two pastel portraits by Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun representing respectively Louis-Philippe d'Orléans and Madame de Montesson for 52,000€ (before charges) at Versailles-Enchères [1]



1. Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun (1755–1842)
Portrait of Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, 1779
Pastel – 80 x 63 cm
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Photo : Versailles Enchères



2. Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun (1755–1842)
Portrait of Mme de Montesson, 1779
Pastel – 80 x 63 cm
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Photo : Versailles Enchères

As explained by the remarkable *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800* posted online by Neil Jeffares and obviously updated scrupulously (today's auction is mentioned there), these works were almost sold as anonymous by the same auctioneers with an estimate of 2 to 3,000€ on 24 November 2013, before being withdrawn [2]. They are, however, signed and dated in pencil on the right, *Mde Lebrun 1779*. These pastels were therefore unpublished before today. The information provided here was taken from the catalogue entry for the auction (written with the help of Neil Jeffares).

Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, known as "le Gros" [the fat one], the father of Philippe-Egalité and the grandfather of Louis-Philippe, married his mistress Madame de Montesson in 1773 after he lost his wife. But this marriage, finally authorized by Louis XV, remainedmorganatic and secret since his new wife could not assume the title of Duchess of Orleans. These two portraits are mentioned in 1779 in the "*Liste des tableaux que j'avais faits avant de quitter la France in 1789*" [the list of paintings I produced before leaving France in 1789] established by Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun in her mémoires [3] (*Monseigneur le duc d'Orléans, Madame la marquise de Montesson*).

A smaller version of the portrait of the Duke d'Orléans (without its companion piece), from a private collection, was exhibited at the Kimbell Museum of Fort Worth in 1982. Since the same type of frame can be found on other paintings by the artist, it seems quite likely that these are originals.

The Louvre's new acquisitions will no doubt be put on display in the retrospective highlighting Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun in late 2015 at the Grand Palais in Paris.

[Version française](#)

[Didier Rykner](#), dimanche 23 mars 2014

Notes

[1] Our thanks to Juliette Trey (@JulTrey) for her tweets which informed us of the purchase, as it was happening.