



Jean-Pierre Péquignot

(Baume-les-Dames 1765 – Sorrento 1807?)

Parca with a Vestal Virgin

Pen and brown and red ink on preliminary graphite drawing

Dimensions: 6 ½'' x 15'' (16.6 x 38 cm) – Framed : 11 ¾'' x 19 7/8'' (29.8 x 50.5 cm)

Inscription on the back of the old mounting: "*Dessins à la Plume par Picquignon*" (Pen drawings by Picquignon)



Early 19th-century Italian frame in wood carved with an outer frieze of pearls and a frieze of foliage

Price on request

This neoclassical frieze, executed with great meticulousness in pen and ink, is a moving and rare testimony to the work of Jean-Pierre Péquignot, an extremely talented and particularly little-known landscape painter from Franche-Comté (East of France).

Although only about twenty paintings and a few drawings are attributed to him today, Péquignot is best known for his friendship with the painter Anne-Louis Girodet de Roucy-Trioson, whom he met in Rome in 1790 and with whom he fled to Naples in 1793. This friendship had a major influence on Girodet's art, as Péquignot introduced him to landscape painting. However, we will also see that some of Girodet's Neapolitan portraits are quite atypical for this artist, resembling our drawing and suggesting that Péquignot influenced all of Girodet's productions during his Neapolitan period.

Péquignot remained in Naples after Girodet left for Venice in 1794, gradually sinking into poverty and alcoholism. He died abandoned by all in Sorrento around 1807 – a true romantic artist's fate!

1. Jean-Pierre Péquignot, an artist's life illuminated by his encounter with Girodet

The son of a blacksmith from Baume-les-Dames, Jean-Pierre Péquignot was trained from the age of ten, along with his brother Antoine (who would become a sculptor), at the Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Besançon. Between 1780 and 1785 they attended the Pawlet Institution, also known as the School for Military Orphans, which enabled them to take drawing classes at the Royal Academy.

Jean-Pierre Péquignot then spent time in David's studio before leaving for Rome in 1788, where he befriended Anne-Louis Girodet de Roucy-Trioson, winner of the *Prix de Rome* in 1789, who settled there in 1790. Péquignot introduced Girodet to landscape painting, and they often explored the Roman countryside together. On January 13, 1793, a popular uprising in Rome directed against the pro-revolutionary sentiments of the residents and leaders of the French Academy led to its closure and forced Péquignot and Girodet to flee to Naples. It was there that Péquignot met the farmer-general Louis-Adrien Prévost d'Arincourt, who hired him as a drawing teacher and took him on a trip to Sicily and Malta from March to July 1793.

Returning to Naples, Péquignot was reunited with Girodet and together they explored the sites of the Bay of Naples until Girodet's departure for Venice in March 1794. Left alone in Naples, Péquignot initially enjoyed the protection of a Swiss man in the service of the kings of Naples, Carl-Ludwig-Sébastien Tschudi, before gradually falling into alcoholism and poverty. He died in extreme poverty in Sorrento, probably in 1807.

2. Description of the drawing and related artworks

The body of Péquignot's work known to date is strikingly modest, contrasting with the immense quality of this artist's output. Alongside some twenty known paintings, only one is

in a French public collection (at the *Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie* in Besançon)¹. We have so far identified only one drawing by the artist in a public collection (at the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm). The artist's last painting to be sold, *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice*, nevertheless bears witness to his extreme pictorial refinement.



Jean-Pierre Péquignot - *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* - whereabouts unknown

In this context, it is not surprising that we have not found any work directly related to this frieze, in which two women are depicted back to back, each seated in profile and accompanied by a pedestal that gives rhythm to the composition and refers to their respective activities. This back-to-back representation suggests that it is a study of two characters who are not necessarily related to each other.

On the far left, we first find a smoking altar in front of which stands what appears to be a vestal virgin, her body draped in a large toga, every fold of which is depicted with meticulous precision.

¹ A painting in the Magnin Museum in Dijon has been attributed alternately to Girodet or Péquignot (or both). Other paintings by Péquignot are held in England (National Trust/Attingham Park), Austria (Schloss Fuschl), and Naples (Italy) : Museum of San Martino, Palazzo Reale, and Capodimonte Museum.



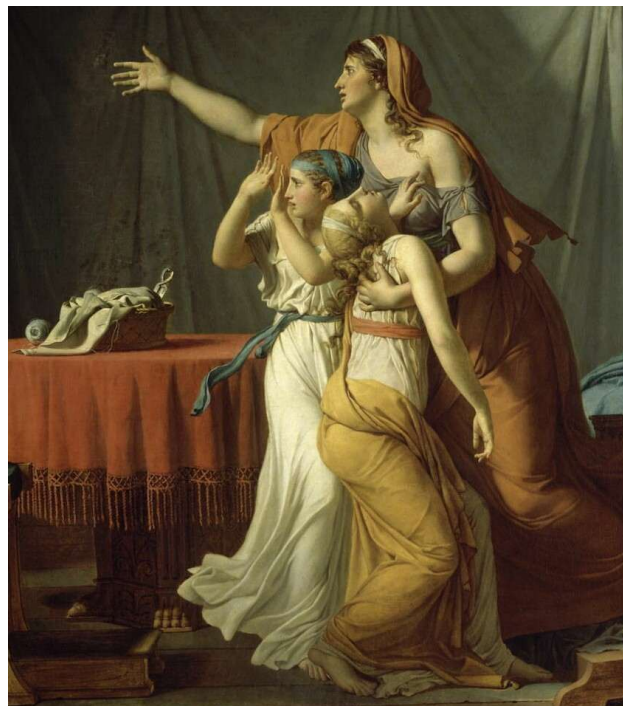
Jean-Pierre Péquignot – *detail of the Vestal Virgin*

To the right of the Vestal Virgin, behind a half-column supporting a still life composed of objects—fabric samples and a precious vase—arranged in a large basket, a young woman is also seated in the classic pose of Clotho, one of the Parcae: with her arms raised toward the sky, she seems to be pulling toward her a thread whose end is wound around a distaff at her feet.



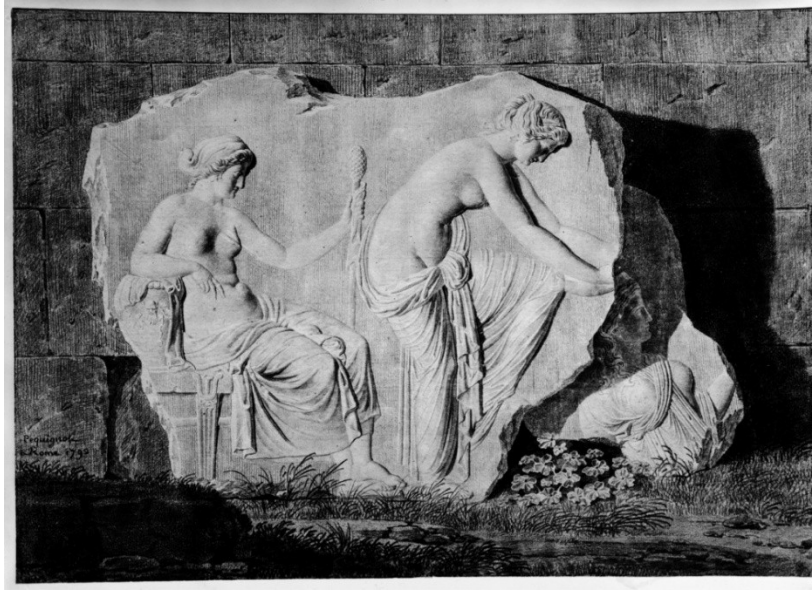
Jean-Pierre Péquignot - detail of the Parca

Clotho's costume, consisting of a fairly close-fitting dress with very tight folds and a headband in her hair, and the still life placed on the pedestal evoke the atmosphere of David's famous painting *Brutus, First Consul, Returning Home After Condemning His Two Sons*, composed in 1789, and lead us to date our drawing to around 1790, shortly after the artist's arrival in Rome.



Jacques-Louis David - *Brutus, First Consul, returning home after condemning his two sons* (detail) - Louvre Museum

Like the drawing preserved at the Nationalmuseum reproduced below, our drawing strikes us with the extraordinary precision with which these two female figures are drawn.



Jean-Pierre Péquignot - *Antique bas-relief* - (NMH 422 1891) Nationalmuseum - Stockholm

The enlargement of the bust of the vestal virgin shown below gives a better idea of the incredible finesse of the pen strokes that intersect to evoke the folds of her clothing and the very particular treatment of the face, using a technique that could almost be described as pointillist !



Jean-Pierre Péquignot - *detail of the Vestal Virgin*

While Péquignot's influence on Girodet's interest in landscapes during his stay in Italy is well known², we found it interesting to compare the finesse of this work, executed entirely in pen and ink, with a beautiful portrait of Girodet executed in pencil, which we sold in 2024. Although a different technique was used, we find the same dazzling work of cross-hatching and modulation of the face through an infinite number of tiny dots. This portrait, which dates from Girodet's Neapolitan period (1793), also reveals, in our opinion, Péquignot's influence on his work as a portraitist, an influence that allowed Girodet to achieve in this portrait the precision of a miniaturist.

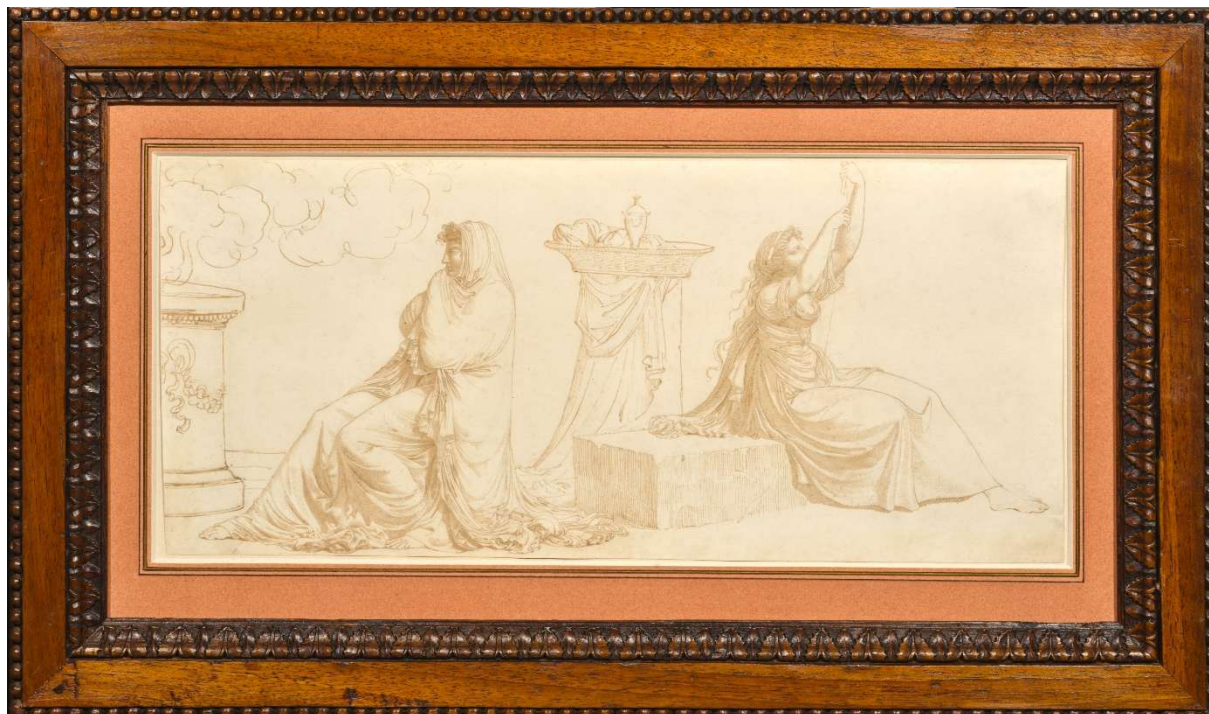


Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson – *Mrs. Marguerite Germain, wife of Lefèvre* – private collection, France

² An exhibition on this theme took place at the Magnin Museum in Dijon.

3. Framing

We chose to frame this drawing in an early 19th-century Italian frame made of finely carved natural wood, which nicely complements both the neoclassical style of the drawing and echoes the delicacy of its execution.



Jean-Pierre Péquignot – *Parca with a Vestal Virgin*

Main bibliographical reference:

Emilie Beck Saiello *Jean-Pierre Péquignot Baume-les-Dames 1765 – Naples 1807* Editions Artema 2005