

FLIGHT OF FANCY: THE GALLE CHANDELIER

April 9, 2019 – April 19, 2020

The J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center



Gérard Jean Galle (French, 1788-1846)

Chandelier

About 1818-19

Gilt bronze; glass; painted copper; gilt tin;
iron armature

The J. Paul Getty Museum

73.DH.76

This chandelier resembles a hot-air balloon. It includes a bowl for goldfish and holds eighteen candles whose flames would illuminate a room after dark. The chandelier would have been a fanciful and intriguing object both in the evening and during the day. While the balloon-like form is entirely modern, various aspects refer to the ancient concept of the four elements: earth (plant motifs), fire (candle flames), water (bowl), air (griffins).

Representing the heavens, the blue globe at the center of the chandelier has gilt stars and is encircled by a gilt-bronze band bearing the twelve symbols of the zodiac.



Aquarius

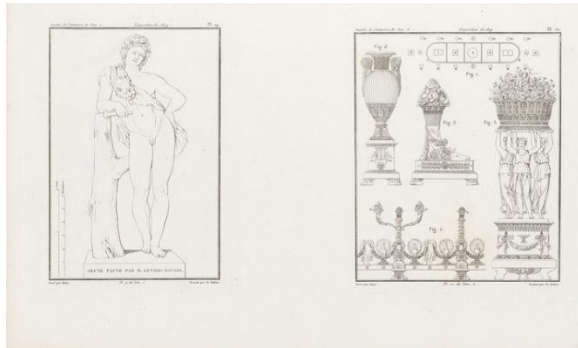


Pisces

The glass bowl was meant to hold water for goldfish. The design includes a drainage hole that is stopped by a metal plug concealed under the bottom finial. The maker, Gérard Jean Galle, described how the swimming fish would amuse the viewer. This idea reflected a design theory at the time suggesting that objects should be not only functional but also gratifying to the eye and the imagination. Unfortunately, the bowl has since cracked and cannot be mended without risking further damage to the glass.

THE PARIS EXHIBITION OF 1819

During the first half of the 1800s, state-sponsored exhibitions of the products of French industry were held in Paris. These events, intended to unite art and industry in the pursuit of progress and modernity, grew steadily over time. The exhibition of 1819, the first to take place in the Louvre palace, included 1,662 exhibitors and ran for thirty-five days. Gérard Jean Galle exhibited a number of pieces, including a chandelier "of new form," and received a silver medal.



Jean Gabriel Victor de Moléon
(French, 1784-1835)
Figure of a Faun (left),
Elements for a Centerpiece (right)
In *Description de l'Exposition de 1819*,
Paris 1821
Etching
The Getty Research Institute, 1355-095
On view April 9 – Oct. 13, 2019

This album illustrates a selection of the items displayed in the Paris exhibition of 1819. On this page, the image at right shows the individual elements and the plan for an elaborate gilt-bronze centerpiece by Gérard Jean Galle that received particular praise from exhibition jurors. The image at left depicts a bronze figure by Louis Stanislas Lenoir-Ravrio (1783-1846), a copy of the ancient marble *Faun* in the Capitoline Museum (Rome). Both Galle and Lenoir-Ravrio produced highly sculptural decorative objects that incorporated figures and motifs inspired by the art of classical antiquity.

Jean Gabriel Victor de Moléon
(French, 1784-1835)
A Variety of Decorative Objects
In *Description de l'Exposition de 1819*,
Paris, 1821
Etching
The Getty Research Institute, 1355-095
On view Oct. 15, 2019 – April 19, 2020



This album illustrates a selection of items displayed in the Paris exhibition of 1819. Here, two mantelpieces are shown along with elements designed for each: firedogs (andirons), candelabra, a mantel clock, and decorative vases. Gérard Jean Galle displayed similar objects at the exhibition, including a number of mantel clocks and a chandelier – items that, like these, incorporate figures and motifs inspired by the art of classical antiquity.

DESIGNS FOR MODERN LIVING

The influence of prominent designers spread widely during the early 1800s through portable prints and design books. As seen in the Galle chandelier, the fashion was to adapt motifs found in ancient art and architecture to new furniture forms. The French design partners Percier and Fontaine wrote that they regarded models from classical antiquity as examples “not to be followed blindly but in keeping with modern customs, usage, and materials.”



Charles Percier (French, 1764-1838) and Pierre François Léonard Fontaine (French, 1762-1853)

Design for a Chandelier

In *Recueil de décorations intérieures* (Collection of Interior Decoration), Paris, 1812

Etching

The Getty Research Institute

83-B3068.c3.pt2.pl.12

Percier and Fontaine were the leading designers under Napoleon I (ruled 1804-1814). This design for a chandelier is from their publication *Collection of Interior Decoration*, a suite of prints begun in 1801 that dominated the Parisian scene for the next twenty years. Here, the candle supports in the form of griffins suggest one possible source for the similar element on Galle's chandelier.

Thomas Hope (English, 1769-1831)

Design for a Chandelier

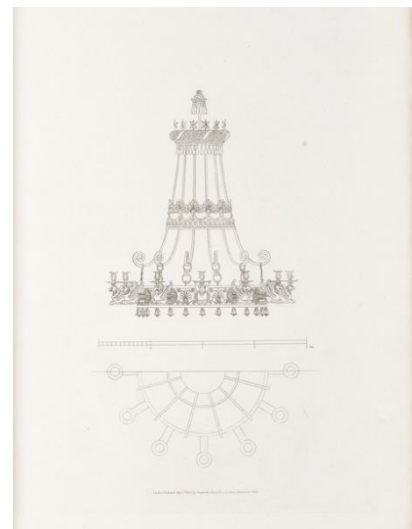
In *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, London, 1807

Etching

The Getty Research Institute

88-B10166.c2

Thomas Hope was an English author and furniture designer whose volume *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* became widely influential in England and on the European continent during the first decades of the 1800s. This book includes an illustration for a chandelier of bronze and gold. Gérard Jean Galle may have been inspired by this design when he made similar griffin figures for his own chandelier.





Francesco Piranesi (Italian, 1756-1810)
*Celebration Given by General Berthier
for the Peace of 1801*
About 1801
Hand-colored etching
The Getty Research Institute
2014.PR.13
On view April 9 – July 7, 2019



Francesco Piranesi (Italian, 1756-1810)
*Celebration Given by General Berthier
for the Peace of 1801*
About 1801
Etching
The Getty Research Institute
2013.PR.51
On view July 9, 2019 – April 19, 2020

This scene depicts an evening celebration given by General Berthier, minister of war, marking the peace between the French Republic, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the German people, at his home and gardens in Paris. The message on the basket of the balloon reads "A LA PAIX" (For Peace). This print by Francesco Piranesi, son of the famous Italian printmaker Giovanni Battista Piranesi, illustrates the contemporary fascination with hot air-balloon flights. Since the first launchings by the Montgolfier brothers in France in 1783, balloon ascensions remained major spectacles for large audiences well into the 1800s.

This material was published in 2019 to coincide with the J. Paul Getty Museum exhibition *Flight of Fancy: The Galle Chandelier*, April 9, 2019 – April 19, 2020, at the Getty Center.

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