

Adélaïde-Marie-Anne Castellas-Moitte (1747-1807)

*Revolutionary, Artist and Diarist*



DEN OTTER

FINE ART



## **Adélaïde-Marie-Anne Castellas-Moitte (1747-1807)**

### *Revolutionary, Artist and Diarist*

*Corisande Evesque*



#### **Biography**

Adélaïde-Marie-Anne Castellas-Moitte was born into a family of jewellers and artists; her grandfather was a jeweller merchant, her uncle an enamel painter at the Manufacture de Sèvres and her cousins were artists too: Nicolas-Antoine Taunay was a painter and Auguste Marie Taunay a sculptor.

Trained under Jean-Jacques Le Barbier, Adélaïde started her career as a painter, but when she married the sculptor Jean-Guillaume Moitte (1746-1810) in 1781 she abandoned painting to become a housewife. Considered an extremely honest woman and dedicated wife by her contemporaries, she greatly supported her husband's career. From 1805 until her death on 18 May 1807, she kept a diary in which she described her daily life- a precious testimony of bourgeois life under the Empire. Alexandre Lenoir, the famous administrator of the Musée des monuments français, referred to Adélaïde stating that 'It is well known that Madame Moitte was highly educated and had literary talents.'<sup>1</sup> While Adélaïde's career as a painter was short-lived, she by no means abandoned her creative talents; besides her written diaries she carefully captured daily life in a large number of drawings. Complimenting her written notes, these highly original and intimate drawings give us a fascinating insight in her daily life and the people that were close to her.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Cousin, *Archives du musée des Monuments français*, Paris, 1883-1897, vol. III, p. 189.

## A Revolutionary and a Figure of Charity

Unfortunately, no portrait of Adélaïde Moitte has come down to us. However, a marble figure of Charity sculpted by Jean-Guillaume Moitte with a face inspired by the features of his wife is preserved today in the Basilica of Saint-Denis (Fig. 1). This allegorical figure echoes the role played by Adélaïde Castellat-Moitte in 1789 during the Revolution. Shortly after the drafting of the Rights of Man (August 26), Adélaïde launched a movement of patriotic offerings to the Nation. On 7 September 1789 she led a procession of eleven women, artists or relatives of artists (including Madame Vien), to the National Assembly in Versailles, dressed in white and adorned with a tricolor cockade and offered their jewellery to the country. In her speech, titled *L'Âme des romaines dans les femmes françaises*, she referred to the gift of the Roman women before Camille took Veies (396 BC); 'It is with this in mind that artists' wives come to offer the august Assembly jewellery that they would blush to wear when patriotism demands the sacrifice.'<sup>2</sup> This episode, engraved by Jean-Louis Prieur (Fig. 2) amongst others, had an enormous impact and was followed some days later by other anonymous donations collected by Mrs Pajou, the wife of the sculptor Augustin Pajou. Buoyed by her impulse of generosity, Madame Moitte also supported the National Convention financially in 1792. Following the siege of Lille and Thionville, she gave 75 livres for the inhabitants of these two cities.

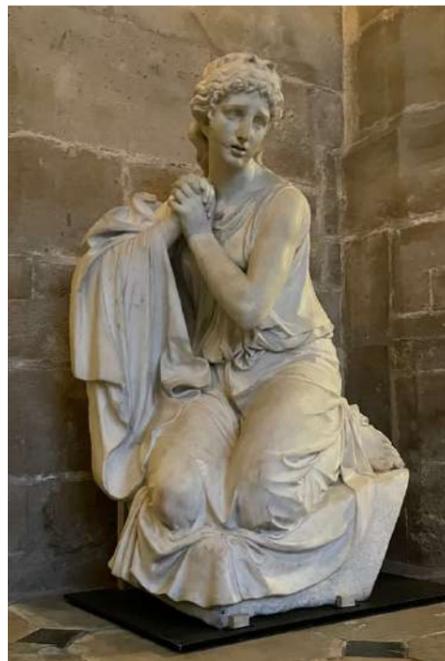


Fig. 1. Jean-Guillaume Moitte, *Charity*, marble, Basilica of Saint Denis.

Furthermore, Adélaïde Moitte participated in the creation of the *Société philanthropique et patriotique de bienfaisance et de bonnes mœurs* in 1793. Instigated by a group of Parisian women, the society aimed to help women in need throughout their lives. The society took in girls aged six to sixteen to learn to read, write, count and sew. It is not known how long the society existed, but it certainly did play a major role in the life of Madame Moitte.

Adélaïde herself took a number of young girls into her home with the aim to educate them. This activity enabled Moitte to provide the couple with an additional income. In the diary that she wrote from 1805 onwards, she recounted the details



Fig. 2. Jean-Louis Prieur, *Offrandes faites par des dames d'artistes à l'Assemblée Nationale Constituante (réunie à Versailles), le 7 septembre*, engraving, Paris, Carnavalet museum.

of her day with those boarding with her. She reported that the mother of one of the boarders, Herminie Sarra, paid 24 francs a month for her daughter to board with the Moitte couple. It is these girls we often see represented in Moitte's drawings- a testimony of their importance in the artist's life.

### The art of drawing

Moitte trained in the art of drawing in Paris with the painter Jean-Jacques François Le Barbier, best known for his paintings of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. Unfortunately, very little is known about her training as an artist, but, as stated above, she is thought to have abandoned painting in favour of drawing soon after her marriage.

The majority of Moitte's drawings were executed on pages of account books in pen and brown ink. These drawings, often depicting the artist's relatives, are frequently found alongside the notes of the Moitte couple's accounts. The pages

<sup>2</sup> A. Castellat-Moitte, *L'Âme des romaines dans les femmes françaises*, Gueffier le jeune, 1789.

are often composed of two drawings above each other, showing scenes from Adélaïde's daily life: girls and women sewing, reading, playing the fortepiano, and men and women writing or drawing.

Intended for an intimate circle only, these drawings were very much appreciated by artists from the Moitte close circle of friends: Berthélémy, Vien, Van Loo and Mrs David, for example, praised them, while the painter François-André Vincent, according to Madame Moitte's diary, pretended not to be able to comment on them. The praise for Moitte's drawings continued after her death; 'The drawings of Miss Castellias, which are part of the cabinet of the late Mr Moitte, her husband, are a credit to this artist, a pupil of Mr Le Barbier,'<sup>3</sup> reads the catalogue of the sale after the death of Jean-Guillaume Moitte in 1810. Several drawings are collected by artists such as the painter Berthélémy, the sculptor Pierre Hippolyte Lemoyne or the engraver Gérard Vidal and later they found their way to important collections assembled by the Danish patron Tønnes Christian Bruun-Neergaard or in that of Mademoiselle de Chaumont.

Today, Moitte's drawings can be found in a number of museum collections; *Portrait of a man*<sup>4</sup> in the Louvre, Paris; *A Seated Man Reading*<sup>5</sup> in the Morgan Library & Museum, New York; *Portrait of a young girl drawing*<sup>6</sup> in the Fondation Custodia, Paris.

### The Moitte couple in 1797

The drawings presented here were all executed around 1797, as is indicated by a number of inscriptions on the sheets. It was at that time that Jean-Guillaume Moitte was sent to Italy by the *Directoire* to collect works of art for transport to the Louvre.

On 11 May 1796, the *Directoire* decided to appoint Government commissioners, which included both artists and scientists, to search for objects of science and art in the countries conquered by the armies of the Republic. On 13 May, four commissioners were appointed: two scientists, André Thouin and Bernard-Germain de Lacépède, and two artists, the painter Jean-Baptiste Regnault and Jean-Guillaume Moitte. Lacépède, Moitte and Regnault, however, refused to leave prompting the *Directoire* to appoint a new team of commissioners on 14 May 1796. The new group of commissioners included Gaspard Monge, Claude-Louis Berthollet, André Thouin, the botanist Jacques-Julien Houtou de La Billardière, the sculptor Claude Dejoux and the painter Berthélémy. Finally, Dejoux having recused himself, he was replaced by Moitte who had changed his mind and

agreed to join the company. Thus, Moitte left Paris in May 1796, arriving in Milan in June and returning to the French capital two years later, on 15 July 1798. It was during this trip that Moitte, in May 1797, drafted a condition report on Raphael's Transfiguration, with the intention of transporting it to Paris. On his return, Moitte was appointed administrator of the Muséum central des Arts (now the Louvre).

As Catherine Huart reported to her husband Gaspard Monge, 'La Citoyenne Moitte [...] sends a sort of diary' to her husband. She adds that 'if her letters have reached him, they will put them in touch with Paris'<sup>7</sup>. The wives of commissioners Monge and Moitte saw each other regularly, in order to exchange information or to make up for the lack of news from one or the other. Catherine wrote on 27 Thermidor IV [14 August 1796]: 'Citizen Moitte came to tell me yesterday that she had also received news of her husband, she read me a page of his letter which contains nothing but praise for Berthollet and you. He praises himself for being your colleague [...]; these praises from an artist as distinguished as Citizen Moitte flattered my little self-esteem, and moved my sensibility; his wife put a charming grace in reading me this passage from her eight-page letter. She is a woman of extremely honest mind, I would like to cultivate her knowledge, I have the pleasure of seeing her often enough. I will tell her the news I receive, and sometimes the worries that the delay causes me.'<sup>8</sup>

It was during this period when Adélaïde was separated from her husband that she produced these intimate drawings that bear witness to her daily life under the *Directoire*.

### Provenance:

Anonymous sale; Christie's, New York, 22 May 1996, lot 12, part of an album containing ninety pages, subsequently broken up and sold individually or in groups.

3 Sale, Paris, Regnault-Delalande, 7 June 1810, p. VI.

4 inv. RF 14824.

5 inv. 2002.65.

6 inv. 2019-T.73.

7 Letter from Catherine Huart to Gaspard Monge, 8 messidor an IV [26 June 1796], private collection.

8 Letter from Catherine Huart to Gaspard Monge, 27 thermidor an IV [14 August 1796], private collection.



## Catalogue

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Drawings are priced at €900 each

## Louise: the adopted daughter of the Moitte couple

Among the drawings presented here, the same face of a young girl can be observed a number of times. This girl can most probably be identified as Louise-Reine Guffroy, whom Adélaïde Moitte regularly mentions in her diary. Louise was born in Arras on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April in 1786. It was at the age of five, when her family fled for the revolutionary actions, that Jean-Guillaume Moitte took her in. Considered by the Moitte family as their own daughter, she was named as heir in the Jean-Guillaume's will. In 1810, when Jean-Guillaume died, Louise married the painter Jean Vignaud, a pupil of David, who in 1820 was appointed director of the drawing school and museum of the city of Nîmes.

At the time these drawings were made, Louis was about 11 years old, and had been living with the Moitte family for six years. Adélaïde Moitte often recounts the sessions she held during which she portrayed Louise. On Friday 17 October 1806 she noted: 'I've drawn with a pen, that means, I continued the drawing, where Louise, with the book on her lap, is asking some questions about music to Fortunée, who is standing in front of her, Herminie sitting on her right and Augustine on the left sewing.'<sup>9</sup>

In the following drawings we find Louise in different attitudes: standing with her arms crossed around a book, pensive at a table or concentrating on her reading. She is often shown with an old woman, who can probably be identified as Adélaïde Moitte's maid, seated next to her.



(recto)

1. *A study of a girl standing at a table and a study of a girl reading (recto); A study of a standing girl and a study of a seated woman (verso)*  
pen and brown ink, proprietary watermark and year 1787  
33.2 x 21 cm

<sup>9</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Journal d'Adélaïde Castellas-Moitte, 1805-1807, 112 leaves: MS-9683.



(verso)

2.

Two studies of a girl seated and standing (recto); A study of a girl standing with a book at a table and study of a girl with an old woman (verso)

pen and brown ink, proprietary watermark

33.3 x 20 cm



(detail, recto)



(detail, recto)



(verso)

3.  
*Studies of girls seated at a table (recto); Studies of a young and an old woman (verso)*  
pen and brown ink, proprietary watermark  
33.3 x 21.4 cm

In the following two drawings, Adélaïde Moitte excels in the use of pen and black ink. In them she juxtaposed, between the lines of her account book, two scenes, in which a girl, most probably Louise, is shown while sewing or seated at a table. She created a play between the round shape of the table and that of the frame that delimits the two drawings to give an impression of a snapshot.

The artist treated the background of the sheet with a play of crosshatching to render the different shadows cast by the characters she represented.



(detail, recto)

4.

*A seated girl at a table and a man with a hat with a girl sewing (recto); Various sketches of figures (verso)*

pen and brown ink, watermark crowned crest with three fleur-de-lis and a Maltese cross inscribed: 'Réabonnemens pour la Société Ph et Pat de Bienf. Et de bonnes mœurs / Novembre vieux Style' (verso)

33.5 x 19.7 cm



(detail, recto)



(detail, verso)

5.  
*Two studies of a young girl (recto); A study of a man, a subsequent study of his hand and various sketches of a girl and her head (verso)*  
pen and brown ink (recto); graphite, pen and brown and black ink, proprietary watermark and date 1787  
31 x 19 cm

## Portraits

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Few portraits by Moitte are known. Executed on plain paper and not on a page of an account book, this drawing was possibly intended as a gift. Here, a young girl, probably boarding with the Moitte couple, is depicted in graphite, an uncommon technique for the artist. The Fondation Custodia (Paris) conserves a portrait of another resident of the Moitte family, which is executed in Moitte's characteristic pen and brown ink technique. The girl shown in the present drawing is depicted at three-quarter length, wrapped in a scarf, and seems to be lost in thought. Through a play of subtle crosshatching, the artist delicately renders the light and shade that fall on the child's face and clothing.



6.  
*Study of a seated girl*  
graphite, fragmentary watermark fleur-de-lis  
25.9 x 20.1 cm



7.  
*A portrait of a seated woman*  
graphite  
inscribed with pen and black ink: 'femme Moitte'  
19.6 x 12.4 cm

Another portrait in graphite by Adélaïde Moitte, this drawing represents a woman, wearing a bonnet, dressed in a simple working dress over which she wears an apron. The crossed-out inscription below indicates that this is Adélaïde. The features of Madame Moitte are not well known to us, but Jean-Guillaume Moitte exhibited a plaster bust of his wife at the Salon of 1789, and a marble bust at the Salon of 1791, both of which have been lost. We only know the facial features of Adélaïde Castellas-Moitte from a sculpture depicting Charity that her husband made in 1780's and for which he used his wife's face as inspiration [see Fig. 1]. The highly Classicist and stylized nature of the sculpture, however, appear to disguise the true facial features of Adélaïde Moitte. The sculpture was donated by Jean-Guillaume to the Musée des Monuments Français. Alexandre Lenoir remarked the following about the sculpture: 'This piece was all the more precious as he represented his wife under the features of Charity, and that was the main reason which determined him to donate it to the Museum, to make the public witness to the love he bore her.'<sup>10</sup>.

When she made the present drawing, Adélaïde Moitte was about 50 years old and the face of the sitter seems to be that of a slightly younger woman. Besides this, the woman's face seems to differ from the one in the sculpture. It is more likely that the woman represented in the drawing is a woman with whom the artist was in regular contact with.

The sitter is framed in an arched framework drawn with forceful hatching. The woman, depicted in modest clothing, gently looks at the viewer with a somewhat dreamy and benevolent gaze.

<sup>10</sup> "Ce morceau était d'autant plus précieux qu'il a représenté sa femme sous les traits de la Charité, et que ce fut le principal motif qui l'avait déterminé à en faire don au Musée, pour rendre le public témoin de l'amour qu'il lui portait.", in J. Cousin, *Archives du musée des Monuments français*, Paris 1883-1897, vol. III, p. 189.

## The fortepiano

Originally invented in Italy at the end of the 17th century, the fortepiano spread widely through Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and became popular in Paris at the end of the century. In her diary, Madame Moitte mentioned the lessons that were given to her boarders: the names of the now forgotten music masters Craener and Rosankustre often appear in her diaries. The salons she organised were an opportunity to listen to the latest fashionable compositions, with Louise often playing the fortepiano.



(recto)

8.  
*A man and a girl at the fortepiano and a mythological (?) scene (recto); Studies of a man with a hat (verso)*  
pen and brown ink (recto); pen and black ink (verso)  
dated '14 pl. an 5' [2 February 1797] (recto)  
33.3 x 20.9 cm



9.  
*A girl playing the fortepiano*  
pen and brown ink, watermark crowned crest with three fleur-de-lis and a Maltese cross  
32.8 x 30 cm

## The art of drawing

In addition to the fortepiano lessons, as well as dance and geography lessons, Madame Moitte's boarders also received drawing lessons as this was considered an important part of a girl's upbringing. Here, however, it is a young man who is being taught drawing by an older man. The draughtsman might be identified as Jean-Guillaume Moitte teaching one of his pupils, before or after his departure for Italy.



10.

*A man teaching a young girl at the fortepiano and a study of a seated girl*  
pen and brown ink, proprietary watermark  
dated '28 pl. an 5' [16 February 1797]  
33.4 x 21.2 cm

The girls boarding with the Moitte's took fortepiano lessons from F.W. Craener, who was a friend of the couple. The man playing the fortepiano shown in this drawing can probably be identified as Mr Craener. He is depicted from behind, wearing a round hat and sitting on a chair in the Directoire style, which testifies to Adélaïde Moitte's interest in fashionable furniture. While Craener is playing, the young boarder, seated to his right, seems to listen attentively to the melody that she will have to perform later on. Here again, Adélaïde Moitte captured these scenes of everyday life, like a drawn diary.



11.

*A seated woman and a study of a man giving a drawing lesson*  
pen and black and brown ink, watermark crowned crest with three fleur-de-lis and a Maltese cross  
33.3 x 21.6 cm



(detail, recto)

**12.**

*A study of a young girl at a table and a study of a young girl reading (recto); A scene from Antiquity (verso)*

pen and brown ink (recto); pen and black ink (verso), watermark crowned crest with three fleur-de-lis and a Maltese cross

33.3 x 21.2 cm

As Alexandre Lenoir pointed out, Adélaïde Moitte had a great deal of education and literary talent<sup>11</sup>. She regularly visited the Parisian Salon, where she met with artists, which she frequented with her husband. The Roman scene depicted here is probably a copy that Adélaïde made of a painting she saw at the Salon or at an exhibition at one of the artist's that the couple was acquainted with. It depicts a Roman soldier advancing towards the imperial couple. A rarity in Moitte's work, this drawing shows the artist's interest in neoclassical subjects and her taste for copying works by contemporary artists.



(recto)

Next two pages: No. 12.

<sup>11</sup> J. Cousin, *Archives du musée des Monuments français*, Paris 1883-1897, vol. III, p. 189.



## Sewing & daily life

One of the main activities of the Moitte's girls was sewing and stitching. As part of their education, they received sewing lessons so that they could sew, repair and embroid clothes for their and the family's use. In return Madame Moitte rewarded them financially; in her diary, she writes about how she gave one of her residents two pennies for sewing well. This is an activity that the girls practised together, by the fire, near the stove, or around the table, as is depicted in these drawings.



13.  
*A girl asleep and two girls sewing (recto); Young girls sewing (verso)*  
pen and brown and black (recto) ink, proprietary watermark  
33.3 x 21.2 cm



14.

*A girl sewing by a pianoforte*  
pen and black ink, watermark crowned crest with three fleur-de-lis and a Maltese cross  
33.4 x 22 cm



15.

*A woman and a girl seated at a table and a boy and a girl next to a table (recto); A girl seated at a table, with a medallion portrait and a study of an old woman reading (verso)*

pen and brown ink, watermark crowned crest with three fleur-de-lis and a Maltese cross

33.1 x 21 cm

Among the various scenes of daily life depicted on this sheet, one shows a young girl, possibly Louise, sitting at a table with her arms crossed. She seems to have finished her work. On the table is a painted medallion, possibly executed by Moitte, with a portrait of a man.

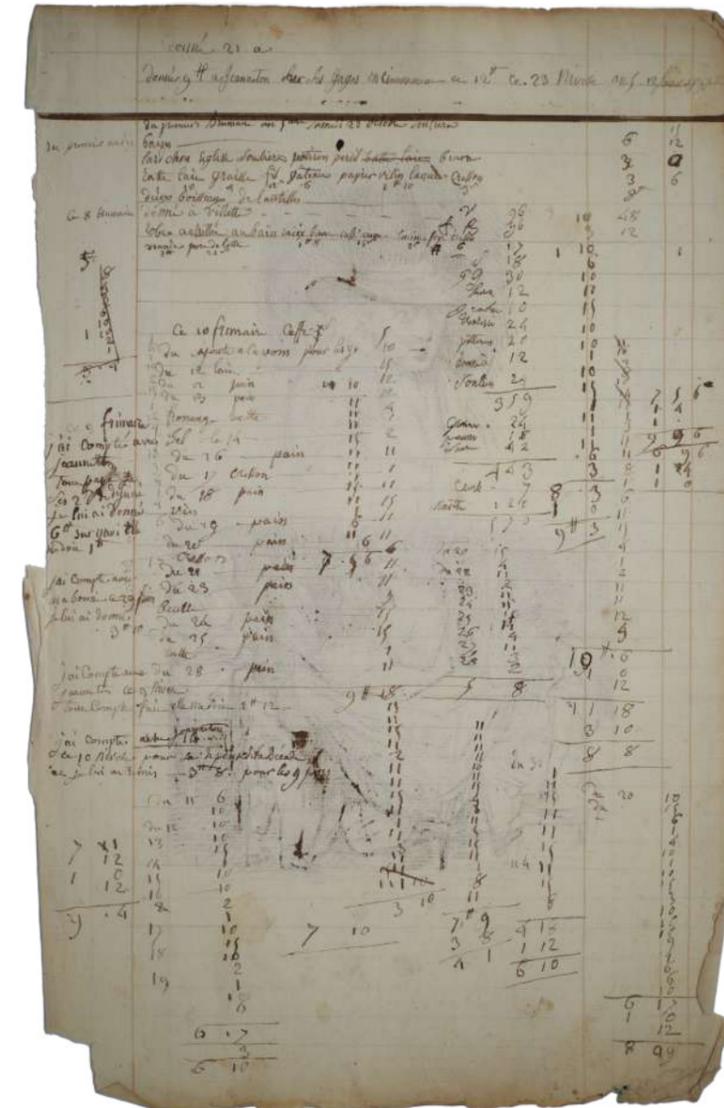


(detail, verso)

## Words and drawings



(recto)



(verso)

16.

A portrait of a man and a woman reading to a group of children (recto); Account and shopping list (verso)

graphite, pen and brown ink, proprietary watermark and year 1787

inscribed 'donné 21 a/ donné 9 F a Jeanneton sur ses gages en [illegible] et 12 F ce 23 Nivôse 12 Janvier 1797 VS/ Du premier Brumaire an 5<sup>ème</sup> Samedi 22 octobre Souliers/ Du premier au dix bains/ lard chou réglisse souliers potiron persil batte-  
lait beurre/ ratte lait grasse [illegible] gâteau papier vélin laque cresson /deux  
boisseaux de lantilles [sic]/ Ce 8 brumaire donné à Villette/ robe achetée [sic] au  
bain radix beurre caffè creme racines foye cresson/ viande porc [illegible] (verso)  
33.4 x 20.8 cm

Adélaïde Moitte drew a scene from family life where a young woman is reading a book to the children around her. While the older children appear to listen attentively, the younger ones playfully hide under the table.

On the verso, Madame Moitte gave precise details of all the expenses incurred, one after the other, in the manner of her diary of 1805, where each day, before recounting her day, she listed the day's errands and their price. This sheet is a characteristic example of Moitte's drawing style in which she skilfully blended drawings from her private life with annotations about her daily life.



17.

*Studies of figures*

pen and black and brown ink, watermark crowned crest with three fleur-de-lis and a Maltese cross

inscribed 'North/ Lin/ Francs/ mère Guf/ père Guf/ fils Guf/ Adrienne/ Joséphine/ Dejerix/ Giraule/ Villette/ Richter/ Godefroi/ Euphémie/ de Grace/ Adélaïde/ le petit pascal/ Alexandre/ Philibert/ sa femme/ Chapelier/ la paysanne/ Jeanneton/ M<sup>de</sup> Berthollet/ M<sup>de</sup> Le Breton/ La petite Piron/ La petite Roland/ M<sup>de</sup> Roland/ Laurene/ Berthélémy/ fournier/ [illegible]/ la mère berthellemi/ Raimond/ Demarets

33.5 x 21.5 cm

Once again mixing writing and drawing, Adélaïde Moitte let her thoughts wander on this sheet. We find here the names of people she saw regularly; Madame Lebreton, who is probably Joachim Lebreton's wife, 'la Mère Berthelemy' and Madame Berthollet, whose husbands were in Italy with Jean-Guillaume Moitte combined with figural studies or more precise studies of faces or hands. The drawings are superimposed on each other, dynamically translating the artist's creative abundance.



(recto)

18.

*Various studies of figures (recto); Register of Contributions and Subscriptions made to establish the Philanthropic and Patriotic Society (verso)*

inscribed with various calculations (recto) and partly illegibly inscribed 'Registre des Contributions et/ Souscriptions faites pour établir la/ Société Philantropique [sic] et Patriotique/ de bienfaisance et de bonnes mœurs/ et noms des personnes contribuables./ Ce premier octobre 1797 10 Vendémiaire an 6/ j'ai donné 12 F à Laurene. Je ne lui dois plus que/ 24 F sans préjudice du courant./ Ce 5 novembre 1797 15 brumaire an 6 j'ai donné/ 24 F à Laurene. Je ne lui dois plus que 12 F sans préjudice du courant./ Je lui ai donné 6 F pour le siège du bois./ Ce 27 Décembre 1797 7 Nivôse j'ai donné à Laurène/ 12 livres, je ne lui dois plus que 24 F sans préjudice du courant./ Ce 27 janvier 1798 8 pluviôse j'ai donné à Laurène/ 12, je ne lui dois plus que 24 F sans préjudice du courant./ Ce 16 Février 1798 28 pluviôse j'ai donné 12 F je ne/ lui dois plus que 24 F sans préjudice du courant./ J'ai fait solde de tout compte à Laurène ce jour d'huy 19/ Ventôse pour ses potagers. Je lui ai donné 24/ pour son droit de garde à raison de cette somme par moi [sic]. Ce premier/ mois commence le 20 Ventôse et finit au 20 Germinal, en conséquence / ce mois est en avance. Et j'ai 20 F/ pour les dépenses qu'il y aura à faire./ A Paris ce 18 Ventôse an 6.' (verso)

pen and brown ink, watermark crowned crest with three fleur-de-lis and a Maltese cross

32.2 x 20.4 cm

un 6' d'écrit.

Champ  
de l'année  
poulu 3<sup>e</sup>  
Ché tout 1

Registre des Contributions et  
Souscriptions faites pour établir la  
Société Philanthropique et Patriotique  
de Bienfaisance et de Bonnes Mœurs  
et Noms des personnes contribuables

Ce premier Octobre 1793 10 Vendémiaire an 6  
J'ai donné 12<sup>l</sup> à Laurène je ne lui dois plus que  
24<sup>l</sup> sans préjudice du Courant.

Le 5 Novembre 1793 15 Brumaire an 6 j'ai donné  
24<sup>l</sup> à Laurène je ne lui dois plus que 12<sup>l</sup> sans préjudice du Courant.

J'ai donné 3<sup>l</sup> pour le Siège du Bois.

Le 27 Décembre 1793 7 Nivôse j'ai donné à Laurène  
12 livres je ne lui dois plus que 24<sup>l</sup> sans préjudice du Courant.

Le 27 Janvier 1794 8 Pluviose j'ai donné à Laurène  
12 je ne lui dois plus que 24<sup>l</sup> sans préjudice du Courant.

Le 16 Février 1794 28 Pluviose j'ai donné 12<sup>l</sup> à Laurène je ne  
lui dois plus que 24<sup>l</sup> sans préjudice du Courant.

J'ai fait solli. de tout Compt. à Laurène ce jour 19  
Ventes de 10 Potages et j'ai lui ai donné 24 pour son  
d'argent gardés à l'usage de cette somme par moi ce premier  
Mars Compté le 20 Ventes et fini au 20 Germinal  
en conséquence ce Mois est en avance et j'ai 20<sup>l</sup>  
pour les dépenses qu'il y aura à faire  
à Paris le 18 Ventose an 6.

12  
14  
16  
19

(verso)

Created in 1793, at a time when many philanthropic societies were being developed, the *Société philanthropique et patriotique de bienfaisance et de bonnes mœurs* [Philanthropic and Patriotic Society of Charity and Good Morals] was a Parisian society initiated by a group of women. Its motto was 'Il se faut entr'aider, c'est la loi de nature' ['We must help each other, it is the law of nature']. The society's members came from all classes, and its members aspired to be an assembly of friends driven by the principle of benevolence and mutual aid. It aimed to bring women to the forefront so that they see [...] that, as the men have, women were born with this majestic dignity that matters for the greater good, that they get back and no more relinquish it without being guilty towards the nature and the strict equity, which forbids to disperse one's heritage wealth.<sup>12</sup> Its purpose was to become a model for France and Europe.

Adélaïde Moitte, who was a member since the society's beginnings, was elected as treasurer. She was in charge of the financial management and, as such, received, together with the citizen Clavière, the subscriptions and the benefits destined for the society. These subscriptions operated on the basis of membership fees which amount to 36 livres per year. Donations could also be received, both financial and material, such as linen, old or new clothes and dry food. The prospectus announcing the creation of the society stated that from 100 subscriptions of 36 livres per year, the company would take up rent. Its ambition was to gradually expand into each Parisian arrondissement. Twice a year, meetings were held to publicly account for the funds received and their use.

In this sheet (18.) Adélaïde Moitte did not list her contributions to the Philanthropic and Patriotic Society, but did list the expenses she incurred with a woman named Laurène, for 'her kitchen garden' and 'her right of custody'. No more is known about her relationship with the latter. Madame Moitte kept the accounts here with great rigour, a quality which has given her the reputation of being a 'good housewife'.

On the verso of the sheet, the artist scribbled various figures, giving free rein to her imagination: the face of a young resident, the head of her cat, a mother and her children and several calculations.

12 « Société philanthropique et patriotique de bienfaisance et de bonnes mœurs », Didot, 1793, p. 7. "qu'aussi bien que les hommes elles reçurent en naissant cette dignité majestueuse qu'il est important pour le bien général qu'elles recouvrent pour ne plus s'en dessaisir sans devenir coupables, envers la nature et la stricte équité, qui défend de dissiper ses richesses patrimoniales".

19.

*A study of a seated man and two women knitting (recto); Studies of a girl (verso)*  
pen and brown ink, watermark crowned crest with three fleur-de-lis  
inscribed '11 Vent 51eme lettre / ...6 Vent 52eme letter / 4 Vent 53 lettre / 1  
Germinal 54 lettre / 9 Germinal 55 lettre / Germ 56 lettres / Germ 57 / 5 Germ 58 /  
8 Germ 59 / 1 Floreal 60 / parti le 2'(recto)  
33.4 x 20.4 cm

Besides scenes from her daily life, Adélaïde Moitte listed in the margin of her account book the mail she received from her husband, who had left for Italy as a commissioner of the Republic. We learn, for example, that in the month of Germinal (the seventh month in the French Republican Calendar), she received six letters from him. In the letters that Catherine Huart sent to her husband Gaspard Monge, one reads about the same impatience for receiving her mail. In these letters she writes about the methods which she employed to have her mail delivered quicker, which were similar to those of Adélaïde Moitte whose letters arrived more quickly<sup>13</sup>. In a letter of 20 Messidor, Year IV [8 July 1796], she told of Adélaïde's anxiety, without news of her husband: 'We have received 4 letters from you since your departure, but [Citizen] Moitte does not receive any as often, it distresses her. Are you separated that you say nothing about her husband? In the General's account about you, he did not name him, and that made her worry again. I didn't dare go there yesterday to tell her your news because you don't talk about him, and fearing that she hadn't received any, that would have made her worry again. It is a long time since she wrote to her husband poste restante in Milan, she gave him great details on the situation in Paris, as for me I am not in a position to give any.'

This anxiety about her husband even made her foresee the worst: she feared that the commissioners of the Republic were without money and wished to petition the Directoire on this subject, a statement that Gaspard Monge denied in October 1796<sup>15</sup>.

Another, more detailed list of letters from Italy by Jean-Guillaume Moitte is now in private collection<sup>16</sup>. It gives precise dates of dispatch and receipt of letters, such as 'Bologna 25 and 27 plus[ieures] arrivee 21 ventose', and shows the enthusiasm with which Adélaïde Moitte followed the progress of her husband's journey, who, for his part, 'is very cheerful, especially since he has received news of the citizen Moitte'<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Catherine Huart to Gaspard Monge, 26 Thermidor year IV [13 August 1796], private collection.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Monge to his wife, Modena, 25 vendémiaire an V [16 October 1796], Palaiseau, Bibliothèque centrale de l'École polytechnique.

<sup>16</sup> Sale; Christie's, New York, 22 May 1996, lot 12.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Monge to his wife, Bologne, 22 messidor an IV [10 July 1796], Palaiseau, Bibliothèque centrale de l'École polytechnique.



(recto)

## Studies of men

20.

A man reading *le 'Journal du soir'* and a study of a seated girl  
pen and black ink, proprietary watermark and year 1787  
dated '9 pl. an 5' [28 January 1797] (recto)  
33.4 x 21.3 cm

The upper part of the sheet shows a man reading the newspaper which can be identified as *Journal du soir, des amis de la liberté et de l'égalité* published by P. Sablier and 'several patriotic writers', which had been published since 1792. This popular newspaper was published twice a day: in the morning and in the evening. From February 1797, it became the *Journal du soir, and a complete collection of laws*.

The date of 9 Pluviôse Year 5, i.e. 28 January 1797, at the bottom of the sheet allows us to situate the political context of the drawing. Bonaparte had besieged Mantua since August 1796 as part of his first Italian campaign. He had fought several battles against the Austrian army, including the battle of Rivoli on 13 and 14 January. On 24 January, the Austrians left Bassano and Mantua capitulated on 2 February. It is precisely at this period that Jean-Guillaume Moitte stayed with the other commissioners of the Republic in the Lombard capital. It goes without saying that Adélaïde Moitte avidly followed the details of the French army's advance in Italy.





(detail, recto)

**21.**  
*A study of a reading man and a study of a woman with a cat on her lap (recto); Two studies of girls (verso)*  
pen and brown ink, proprietary watermark  
33.3 x 22 cm



(verso)

22.

Two studies of a seated man (recto); Studies of a cat and the head and shoulders of a man (verso)

pen and brown ink, proprietary watermark

33.4 x 21 cm



(detail, recto)

23.

*A man with a cat on his lap and a seated man (recto); Studies of young women (verso)*

pen and brown ink (*recto*); pen and black and touches of brown ink (*verso*),

proprietary watermark

inscribed '17 pl.' [5<sup>th</sup> February] (*recto*); 'Une souris qui / n'a qu'un trou/ est bientôt prise' / 'Qui mal l'y vaut/ mal l'y trouve' (*verso*)

33.3 x 20.7 cm

The cat in the man's lap at the top of the sheet is probably the one that Madame Moitte mentions in her diary; 'I have continued a pen-and-ink drawing I started a few days ago. It is Louise with the two little girls, for music. She is holding a book. Augustine is behind, sewing, and as our little cat Michette has taken a mouse, Catherine and Augustine are watching her do her tricks. I drew a picture underneath, with both heads turned towards this object, which we can't see'<sup>18</sup>. This cat is often found in Madame Moitte's drawings, where she studies the different positions of the animal.

This passage also evokes the way in which Adélaïde Moitte composes her drawings. As on most of the sheets presented here, the artist depicted two different scenes above each other, separated by a pen stroke. Here, the two scenes correspond to each other, as another study of a man is worked out in the lower half of the sheet. Both sitters are dressed in coats that were fashionable during the *Directoire*.

On the *verso*, in the margin, several proverbs are annotated. 'A mouse with only one hole is soon caught', which means that a person with only one string to his bow is likely to fail, or to be caught. This expression reflects the importance that Adélaïde Moitte placed on the education of young girls.



(recto)

## Proverbs



(detail, recto)

24.

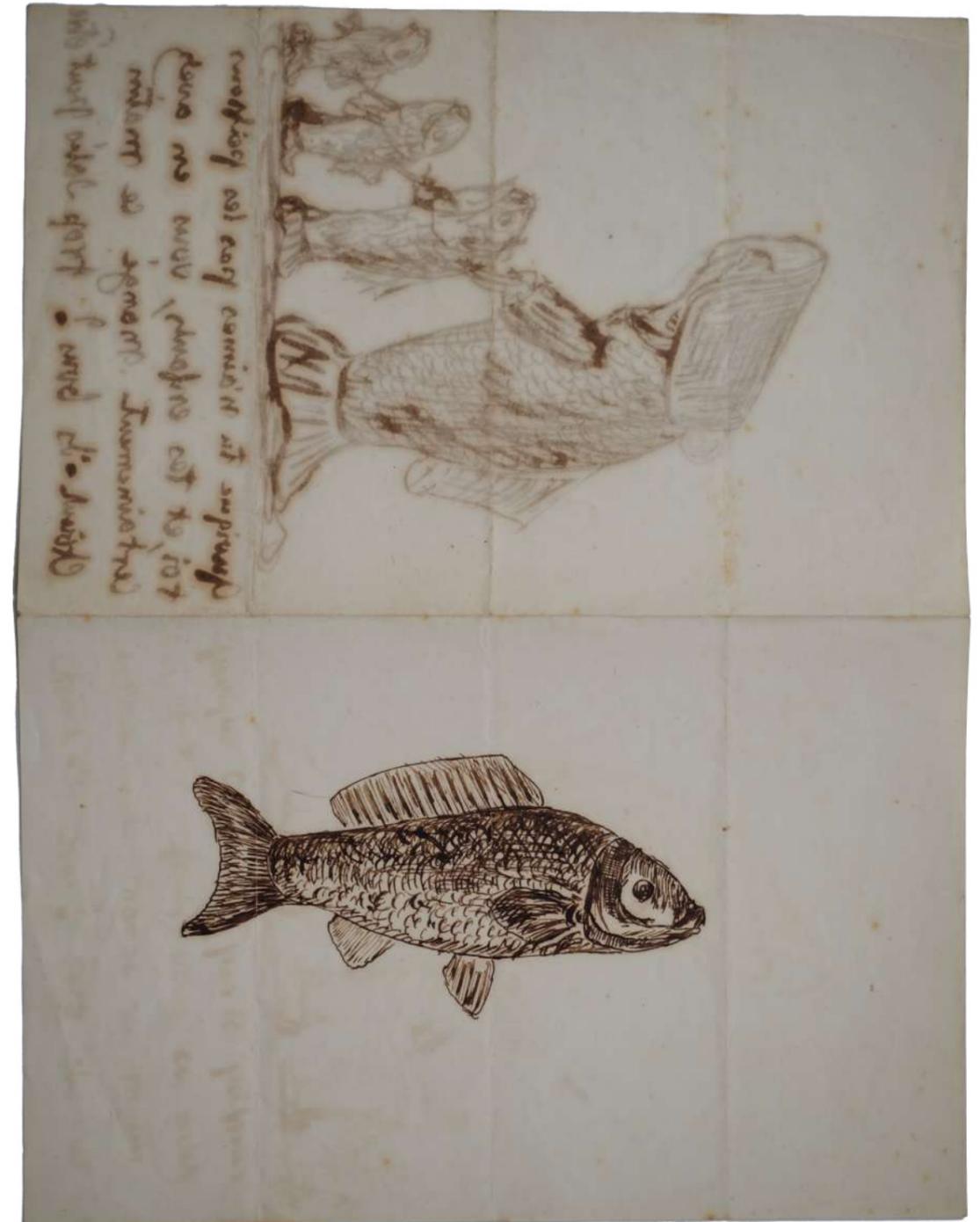
*A caricature of a fish family*

traces of graphite chalk, pen and brown ink on wove paper

inscribed 'Quoique tu n'aimes pas les poissons/ toi et tes enfants, vous en avez / certainement mangé ce matin/ étaient-ils bons ? trop salés peut-être' (recto)

20.6 x 26.6 cm

This drawing shows a fish family on a sheet of paper folded in two, an unusual format for the artist: the mother, wearing a late 18<sup>th</sup> century bonnet, walks behind her three children who are holding hands. Underneath the drawing is an inscription which reads 'Although you don't like fish, you and your children certainly ate some this morning, were they good? too salty perhaps' which seems to set the tone for the scene. The precise meaning of the drawing and inscription are hard to decipher today, but it was possibly intended to make the boarders and those around Madame Moitte laugh. A rare example of this type of drawing in Adélaïde's *œuvre*, this sheet underlines the artist's talents as a caricaturist, which were already recognised at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



(detail, verso)