



HENRI DE GISSEY

(Paris, 1621 - Paris, 1673)

Monsieur Saintot, Academiste de Chiron

Bears inscription: *Académie de Chiron/ Mrs Saintot/Bontemps; Cabou. Les Srs Mollier. Bruneau. Langlois. Baptiste/Le Vacher, Beauchamp De Lorges & Dolinet*

gouache heightened with gold on vellum

313 x 230 mm

Henri de Gissey was dessinateur ordre du Cabinet du Roy, responsible for the designs of Louis XIV's court entertainments during the early part of his reign in the 1650s and 1660s.

The drawing is for "les Noces de Pelée et de Thetis" of 1654. Based on a libretto by Fancesco Buti, set to the music of Carlo Caprioli, the ballet was choreographed by Isaac de Benserade, the sets designed by Giacomo Torelli and the costumes principally conceived by Henri de Gissey.

The present figure represents one of the académiciens (pupils) of Chiron the Centaur, who was renowned for his knowledge of music, medicine and hunting and who instructed in the gentle arts all the heroes of his age. At the beginning of Act III, which opens in Thetis's palace, Chiron sets his 'académiciens' to perform a curious dance to distract Peleus. These figures are described as being dressed as Indians; their leader, a figure perched on a camel, conducts two groups of dancers with brightly coloured plumage who move to a rhythm beaten out on their small tambourines, shaped like mirrors. This detail apparently refers to the then commonly held belief in the Indian custom of capturing parrots through the use of mirrors and percussion instruments. The inscription on the present drawing identifies the figure depicted as Monsieur Saintot and, below, lists his fellow académiciens.