



Fig 1 'Lucretia' from *La Galerie des femmes fortes*, engraving by Gilles Rousselet and Abraham Bosse after a design by Claude Vignon

## Vignon, Claude

Tours 1593 – 1670 Paris

Three suites of prints after designs by Claude Vignon, known as *La Galerie des femmes fortes*; *Sept Merveilles du Monde*; *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*.

Paris, Pierre I Mariette, [circa 1640–1647]

FOLIO (410 × 285 mm), I: *La Galerie des femmes fortes*, title and twenty prints (platemarks circa 340 × 215 mm), complete, the title an engraving by Charles Audran after a design by Pietro da Cortona, the twenty other prints combined engravings and etchings by Gilles Rousselet in collaboration with Abraham Bosse after designs by Claude Vignon; all prints in an unrecorded second state (with numbers 1–21 added in the matrices at lower right): plate 1 (title) lettered *La Galerie des Femmes Fortes Par le Père Pierre Le Moyne de la Compagnie de Jesus | Anne d'Austriche Reyne Regente de France Mere du Peuple | Petrus Berretinus Corton jnuenit | Karol. Audran fecit*, pl. 2 signed *Vignon invenit*. | *Aegid. Rousselet et ABosse Sculpservunt*. | *Mariette excudit*. *Cum privilegio Regis et Reginae Regentis* beneath a caption (*Debore, Profetisse et Gouvernante des Hebreux...*) identifying the subject and explicating the action taking place in the background, the other plates signed *Vignon invenit*. | *Mariette excudit cum privilegio Regis* (or close variation thereof), with appropriate caption.

II: *Sept Merveilles du Monde*, seven prints (platemarks circa 360 × 220 mm), complete, combined engravings and etchings by Gilles Rousselet in collaboration with Abraham Bosse after designs by Claude Vignon; all prints in second state (with numbers 1–7 in the matrices at lower right): the plates signed *Vignon Inventor* | *Rousselet fecit* | *Mariette excudit Avec Priuilege* (pls.1, 2, 4, 5, 7), *Mariette excudit Avec Priuilege* (pls.3, 6) beneath captions identifying their subject.

III: *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*, seven prints (platemarks circa 380 × 220 mm), complete, combined engravings and etchings by Jean Couvay in collaboration with Abraham Bosse after designs by Claude Vignon; all prints in second state (with Mariette's excudit and numbers 1–7 in the matrices at lower right): the plates signed *Vignon Inventor* (pls.1, 4–7), *V Inventor* (pl. 2) *Vingon Inventor* (pl. 3) | *Couvay fecit* | *Mariette excudit Avec Priuilege* (pls.1, 3, 5), *Mariette excudit Avec Priuilege* (pls.2, 4, 6, 7), beneath captions identifying their subject.

PROVENANCE Pierre Berès, his sale by Pierre Bergé & Associés, 'Fonds de la librairie Pierre Berès. Des incunables à nos jours, 4ème partie', Paris, 17 December 2007, lot 91

Light spotting on verso of six plates (*La Galerie des femmes fortes*, plates 6, 8, 19; *Sept Merveilles du Monde*, plates 1, 2; *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*, plate 5), short tears in a few lower margins; otherwise well-preserved impressions. Covers of the binding abraded.

BINDING contemporary French mottled calf; back decorated in gilt.

**T**HREE SUITES OF PRINTS engraved after designs by Claude Vignon, a highly versatile artist, painter and prolific originator of designs for illustrators, especially sought after by writers of the Précieux circle, such as Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, Madeleine de Scudéry, and Jean Chapelain. In his youth, Vignon had studied in Rome, where he formulated a distinctive Mannerist-Caravaggesque style well-suited for heroic portraiture.

In *La Galerie des femmes fortes*, twenty famous women of ancient, biblical, and recent history are depicted in full-length, theatrical poses of great pathos, and often in movement. All the prints consist of two planes, one so far in advance of the other that the heroine who occupies it towers over the figures in the background scene, adding considerably to her grandeur. Different moments in time are depicted in the foreground and background of each composition; the foreground figure of 'Judith', for example, is shown with the severed head of Holofernes, while in the background scene an angel hands the praying heroine her sword. Gilles Rousselet (1610–1686) engraved the figure in each print and Abraham Bosse (1602–1676) etched the background scene.<sup>1</sup> A number of Vignon's preparatory drawings for the series are known.<sup>2</sup>

The title-print of the suite, representing the regent widow of Louis XIII Anne of Austria as another example of a strong woman acting heroically, was designed by Pietro da Cortona (1596–1669) and engraved by Charles Audran (1594–1674).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On this long-time collaboration, see Véronique Meyer, 'Bosse, Rousselet et Vignon' in *Claude Vignon en son temps: Actes du colloque international de l'université de Tours (28–29 janvier 1994)*, edited by Claude Mignot and Paola Pacht Bassani (Paris 1998), pp.189–208.

<sup>2</sup> Paola Pacht Bassani, *Claude Vignon 1593–1670* (Paris 1992), pp.437–447, nos. 440, 442, 446, 447, 449, 451; Suzanne Folds McCullagh, in *In arte venustas: studies on drawings in honour of Teréz Gerszi presented on her eightieth birthday*, edited by Andrea Czére (Budapest 2007), pp.142–147, no. 45. A study for an unexecuted illustration of Cleopatra (Pacht Bassani no. 454) was sold by Sotheby's, Paris, 25 March 2009, lot 41.

<sup>3</sup> Pietro's preparatory drawing is in the Musée des Beaux-arts, Lille; see Barbara Brejon de Lavergnée, *Catalogue des dessins italiens: Collection du Palais des beaux-arts de Lille* (Paris 1997), p.42, no. 64. On the apparent model for the frontispiece (engraved by Audran after Vouet, for Nicéron's *Thaumaturgus opticus*, published in 1646), see Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: the image of the female hero in Italian Baroque art* (Princeton 1989), p.165 and figs.147–148. The symbolism of the frontispiece is explored by Ian Maclean, *Woman triumphant: feminism in French literature, 1610–1652* (Oxford 1977), pp.221–222; see also Barbara Gaetgens, 'Macht-Wechsel oder die Übergabe der Regentschaft' in *Die Galerie der starken Frauen = La galerie des femmes fortes: Regentinnen, Amazonen, Salondamen*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, edited by Bettina Baumgärtel and Silvia Neysters (Munich 1995), pp.75–76.

The prints are usually encountered as illustrations within a book by the Jesuit Pierre Le Moyne (1602–1671), entitled *La Galerie des femmes fortes avec leurs portraits*, and published at Paris 'Chez Antoine de Sommaville, au Palais en la salle des Merciers, à l'Escu de France' under a privilege granted to Sommaville on 1 April 1647. Only one of sixteen subsequent editions of Le Moyne's book published between 1647 and 1672 (in French and also English, German, Spanish, and Italian translations) is illustrated by these plates; the others have mediocre copies of the Vignon-Rousselet-Bosse plates, or are not illustrated.<sup>4</sup> Vignon's *femmes fortes* thereby became widely disseminated and served as models for contemporary painters and craftsmen.<sup>5</sup> Today the images are chiefly of interest for the study of feminism in France in the seventeenth century<sup>6</sup> and the visual representation of powerful women generally.<sup>7</sup>

Although a few specialists speculated that Pierre I Mariette retained the matrices and printed impressions which he sold himself, until now no such impressions have come to light.<sup>8</sup> In our hitherto unrecorded reissue of the prints by Mariette, the frontispiece and twenty plates are numbered, and the heroines presented in new order

<sup>4</sup> The exception is an English translation of Le Moyne's book published in 1652 by Henry Seile (ESTC R12737). Antony Griffiths, *The Print in Stuart Britain, 1603–1689* (London 1998), p.184: 'Either the plates themselves were sent over, or a pile of impressions'. In the British Library copy (10603.k.2), the prints are struck on a French paper manufactured by Benoît Colombier (watermark like Edward Heawood, *Watermarks mainly of the 17th and 18th centuries*, Hilversum 1950, nos. 2426–2429).

<sup>5</sup> Patric Ramade, 'Une source d'inspiration du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: La Galerie des femmes fortes de Claude Vignon' in *Bulletin des Amis du Musée de Rennes* 4 (1980), pp.19–26; Pacht Bassani, *op. cit.*, 1992, p.437; Vittoria Masdea, 'Un inedito ciclo pittorico ad Asti: Pietro Laveglia e le eroine di Palazzo dei Leoni' in *Studi piemontesi* 31 (2002), pp.371–380.

<sup>6</sup> Maclean, *op. cit.*, chapter VII: 'Feminist Literature and the Visual Arts', esp. pp.219–227, reproducing four prints (as figs.14, 20–21, 23); Garrard, *op. cit.*, chapter II: 'Historical Feminism and Female Iconography', esp. pp.165–169, reproducing four prints (as figs.145–147, 150).

<sup>7</sup> *Donna è... L'universo femminile nelle raccolte casanatensi*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Biblioteca casanatense, Rome, edited by Angela Adriana Cavarra (Milan 1998), pp.275–276, no. 12; *Die Galerie der starken Frauen*, *op. cit.*, pp.170–174, no. 55; *Women who ruled: queens, goddesses, Amazons in Renaissance and Baroque art*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, edited by Annette Dixon (London 2002), pp.48–49 nos. 13–14, p.187.

<sup>8</sup> Pacht Bassani, *op. cit.*, 1992, pp.438–447, nos. 434G–453G, repeatedly stating 'un seul état est connu'; Véronique Meyer, *L'œuvre gravé de Gilles Rousselet, graveur parisien du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: catalogue général* (Paris 2004), p.294: 'Il est possible qu'elle ait paru indépendamment du livre pour lequel elle a été gravée: elle figure en effet dans la plupart des collections des estampes et l'excutid de Mariette autorise cette hypothèse'; *Abraham Bosse: savant graveur, Tours, vers 1604–1676, Paris*, catalogue of an exhibition held 20 April–11 July 2004 at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, edited

the Old Testament prophetess and judge ■ Deborah, shown armed with a sword and shield, and in the background scene exhorting Barak to lead his men against Sisera, and deliver Israel from the oppression of the Canaanite King Yavin (pl. 2); the Jewish widow ■ Judith, shown returning to Bethulia with the disembodied head of the general Holofernes, his camp depicted in the background (pl. 3); the Israelite ■ Jahel, married to a Canaanite, shown holding the tent peg which she will drive through the head of Barak, the aftermath of her deed depicted in the background (pl. 4); a Jewish woman (Hannah, here named ■ ‘Salomone’), whose seven sons were tortured and executed by Antiochus for refusing to bow down to a statue and eat pork, shown in the background telling her youngest child to refuse the king’s commandment (pl. 5); ■ Marianne, wife of Herod, falsely accused by him of tyranny and infidelity, and executed (pl. 6); ■ Zenobia, Queen of the Palmyrene Empire after the assassination of her husband and stepson, shown in the background scene to be a fearless huntress (pl. 7); the Roman ■ Arria, wife of the Cicina Paetus, who chose death over widowhood when her husband was condemned to death by the Emperor Claudius (pl. 8); ■ Porcia, the wife of Brutus, and implicated with him in the plot to assassinate Julius Caesar, shown in the background committing suicide by swallowing live coals (pl. 9); ■ Cloelia, held hostage by the Etruscan king Lars Porsenna, shown in the background escaping with other young Roman girls on horseback across the river Tiber (pl. 10); ■ Panthea, wife of Abradatas, king of Susa in Xenophon’s life of Cyrus, who commits suicide after her husband’s death in battle (pl. 11); a young ■ French maid, abducted by Duke Amalo in Gregory of Tour’s *Historia Francorum*, who resorts to murder to preserve her chastity (pl. 12); ■ Artemisia II of Caria, the grieving widow of king Mausolus, shown with the cup in which she mixed his ashes in a daily drink during the two years that she survived him (pl. 13); the Roman ■ Lucretia, holding the dagger with which she committed suicide after her rape by Sextus Tarquinius (pl. 14) (see Fig. 1); the Galatian princess and priestess of Artemis ■ Camma, widow of Sinatus, who avenged the death of her husband by poisoning his rival and herself, holding the deadly chalice (pl. 15); ■ Pompeia Paulina, the wife of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, shown attempting suicide while in the background her husband slowly bleeds to death (pl. 16); the Milesian ■ Monime, Mithridates’ wife, holding the broken diadem with which she had tried to hang herself, shown in the background offering her neck to the armed eunuch who had brought her the order to die (pl. 17); a young ■ Cypriot, carrying the torch with which she set fire to the Turkish fleet in the harbour of Nicosia (pl. 18); ■ Joan of Arc, in the background her soldiers break the siege of Orléans (pl. 19); ■ Mary Stuart, queen of Scotland, grasping a crucifix, her martyrdom depicted in the background (pl. 20) ■ Eleanor of Castile, wife of Prince Edward (the future Edward I of England), and his companion on the Eighth Crusade when she is said to have saved his life by sucking deadly poison from a knife wound, this scene depicted in the background (pl. 21)

The second suite of prints in the album, known as the *Sept Merveilles du Monde*, is another collaboration of Claude Vignon and the printmakers Gilles Rousselet and Abraham Bosse. Rousselet again engraved the full-length figures depicted in the foregrounds and Bosse etched the canonical seven wonders of the ancient world shown in the backgrounds. Beneath each print are six lines of expository verse of unstated origin.



Fig 2 ‘Ptolemy’ from *Sept Merveilles du Monde*, engraving by Gilles Rousselet and Abraham Bosse after a design by Claude Vignon

by Sophie Join-Lambert and Maxime Préaud (Paris 2004), p.242: ‘L’excudit de Mariette laisse supposer que les planches parurent aussi indépendamment du livre’.

The subjects are presented in this order

■ Sphiron, before the colossal ivory and gold Statue of Zeus that he commissioned from the Athenian sculptor Phidias *circa* 440BC (pl. 1); ■ Pharaon (Khufu, or Cheops), the second pharaoh of the Fourth Dynasty, generally accepted as being the builder of the Great Pyramid of Giza shown in the background (pl. 2); ■ Ptolemy, with the Lighthouse of Alexandria conceived and initiated by Ptolemy Soter around 290BC, and completed after his death, during the reign of his son Ptolemy Philadelphus (pl. 3) (see **Fig. 2**); ■ Teagene, depicting in the background the Colossus of Rhodes sculpted by Chares of Lindos (pl. 4); ■ Antiope, Queen of the Amazons, before the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus where the Amazons offered sacrifices to their goddess (pl. 5); ■ Semiramis, legendary Queen of Assyria, showing in the background the Hanging Gardens of Babylon (pl. 6); ■ Artemisia II of Caria, showing in the background the Mausoleum of her husband Maussollos at Halicarnassus (pl. 7)

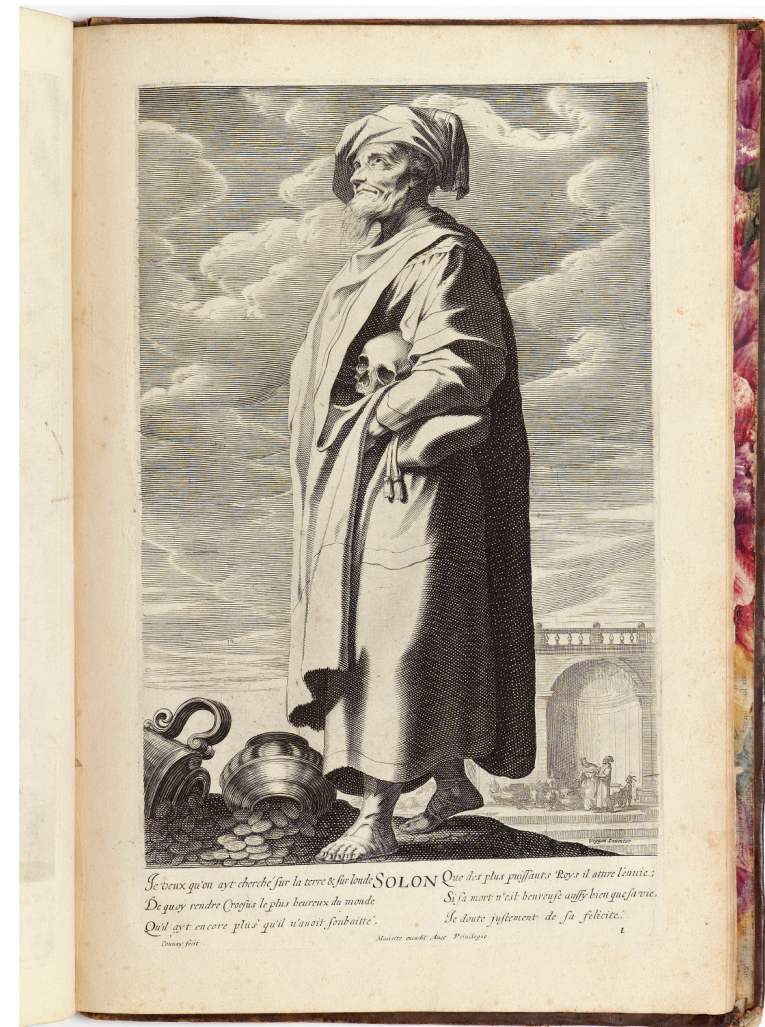
Véronique Meyer suggests this suite was executed about 1639–1640, and cites as a *terminus ante quem* a thesis print by Gérard Jollain engraved in 1646. She identifies two states (before and with numbers), locates impressions of both (in the Bibliothèque nationale de France), and reproduces a set of impressions in first state. None of Vignon's preparatory drawings for the series is known to survive.

The third suite in our album, known as *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*, depicts the purported founders of Western Philosophy. All the prints were designed by Claude Vignon (one of his preparatory drawings is known).<sup>9</sup> Jean Couvay (1622–*circa* 1680) engraved the foreground figures and Abraham Bosse again etched the background scenes. Six lines of verse of unstated origin appear beneath each print.

The subjects are presented in this order

■ Solon of Athens, with a skull under his arm, shown in the background visiting Croesus and oblivious to his treasures (pl. 1) (see **Fig. 3**); the tyrant ■ Pittacus of Mytilene, his famous duel with the Athenian general Phrynnon depicted in the background (pl. 2) (see **Fig. 4**); ■ Bias of Priene before a besieged city in flames (pl. 3); ■ Cleobulus of Lindos, conducting a sacrifice in the background (pl. 4); ■ Chilon of Sparta, with a tournament taking place behind him (pl. 5); the tyrant ■ Periander of Corinth, grasping in one hand a club, branch of laurel, and sceptre, and in the background seated on his throne (pl. 6); the astronomer ● Thales of Miletus, shown again in the background with his instruments (pl. 7)

<sup>9</sup> 'Cleobolus', in the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York; see Hilliard T. Goldfarb, *From Fontainebleau to the Louvre: French drawing from the seventeenth century* (Cleveland 1989), pp.137–138, no. 67; Pacht Basani, *op. cit.*, 1992, no. 296.



**Fig. 3 'Solon' from *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*, engraving by Jean Couvay and Abraham Bosse after a design by Claude Vignon**

A mention of the matrices in the probate inventory of the wife of Pierre Mariette, Geneviève Le Noir (dated 12 August 1641), provides a *terminus post quem* for this suite of prints.<sup>10</sup> A proof impression of 'Solon' before addition of the names of Vignon and Mariette is reproduced by Join-Lambert and Maxime Préaud (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Est Ed 30, rés).

REFERENCES Charles Le Blanc, *Manuel de l'amateur d'estampes* (Paris 1854–1856), i, p.87, no. 279 (Audran, *La Galerie des femmes fortes*); i, p.476, nos. 657–663 (Bosse, *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*), nos. 664–670 (Bosse, *Sept Merveilles du Monde*); i, p.482, no. 918 (Bosse, *La Galerie des femmes fortes*); ii, p.62, nos. 90–96 (Couvay, *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*); iii, p.374, nos. 70–76 (Rousselet, *Sept Merveilles du Monde*); André Blum, *L'œuvre gravé d'Abraham Bosse* (Paris 1924), p.86, nos. 1466–1472 (*Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*), nos. 1473–1479 (*Sept Merveilles du Monde*), nos. 1493–1512 (*La Galerie des femmes fortes*); Bibliothèque nationale (France), *Inventaire du fonds français; graveurs du XVIIIe siècle*, compiled by Roger Armand Weigert (Paris 1939), i, pp.208–209, no. 304 (Audran, *La Galerie des femmes fortes*); i, pp.533–534, nos. 1461–1467 (Bosse, *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*), nos. 1468–1474 (Bosse, *Sept Merveilles du Monde*), nos. 1487–1506 (Bosse, *La Galerie des femmes fortes*); *Inventaire du fonds français; graveurs du XVIIIe siècle*, compiled by R.A. Weigert (Paris 1954), iii, pp.209–210, nos. 61–67 (Couvay, *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*); Paola Pacht Bassani, *Claude Vignon 1593–1670* (Paris 1992), pp.360–364, nos. 294–300G (*Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*, in second state); pp.364–369, nos. 301–307G (*Sept Merveilles du Monde*, wrongly stating 'un seul état est connu'); pp.437–447, nos. 434G–453G (*La Galerie des femmes fortes*, in second state); Véronique Meyer, *L'œuvre gravé de Gilles Rousselet, graveur parisien du XVIIIe siècle: catalogue général* (Paris 2004), pp.178–180, nos. 160–166 (*Sept Merveilles du Monde*), pp.288–294, nos. 333–352 (*La Galerie des femmes fortes*); *Abraham Bosse: savant graveur, Tours, vers 1604–1676, Paris*, catalogue of an exhibition held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, edited by Sophie Join-Lambert and Maxime Préaud (Paris 2004), p.204, no. 178 (*Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*); pp.242–243, nos. 241–242 (*La Galerie des femmes fortes*)



Fig. 4 'Pittacus' from *Les Sept Sages de la Grèce*, engraving by Jean Couvay and Abraham Bosse after a design by Claude Vignon

<sup>10</sup> Marianne Grivel, *Le commerce de l'estampe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Geneva 1986), p.349 (Archives nationales, Minutier central des notaires parisiens, LVIII, 72).