

# La miniature en Europe

Des portraits de propagande  
aux œuvres éphémères

Éditions du CEREMIF



Fig. 1 - Portrait of Sergey Kozlovskiy, 1802  
a) © The State Russian Museum, P-37859  
b) Private collection

Fig. 2 - Portrait of Prince Friedrich Ludwig of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, 1798  
a) © The Royal Collection, 42607  
b) © The State Russian Museum, P-37896



Fig. 3 - Portrait of Princess Angusta of Hesse-Kassel, 1797  
a) © The State Russian Museum, P-37904. b) Leo Spik. Auction. September 21, 2012, lot n° 1992  
c) © The Polivanitskiy collection (Moscow)



Fig. 4 - Portrait of Prince Arkhondovich Tolstoy, 1801  
a) © Fra J. F. Gikera Collection (Mila)  
b) © The State Russian Museum, P-37852

Fig. 5 - Portrait of Grand Duchess Ekaterina Aleksevna  
with her daughter Grand Duchess Maria Aleksevna, 1801  
© Sotheby's, May 25, 1985, lot n° 23



Fig. 6 - The signatures of Charles-Joseph de La Celle de Châteaubourg (1) and Dominique Emmanuel de La Selle Chevalier de Châteaubourg (2)

## Emmanuel de La Selle, Chevalier de Châteaubourg (1762-1806)

Michael Asvarishch

In 1920 the Russian Museum received an album of drawings by an unknown artist<sup>1</sup>. The album was bound in dark blue morocco leather with gold embossing. On the back cover of the binding was a sticker « A L'ART ANCIEN / GEORGES SEMPE / NICE / 50 AVENUE DE LA GARE » (possibly, the name of a store). Besides the sticker was an inscription which reads « A gift from Alexei<sup>2</sup>, December 24, 1903, T/S [Tarskoe Selo] ». The inscription was probably written by Alexei's elder brother, Grand Duke Vladimir Aleksandrovich<sup>3</sup> (1847-1909).

The album contains 87 vellum sheets (15 x 19 cm) water-marked with « T Barrat 1818 ». The drawings (162 in number) are done in black, red, blue ink or sepia on semi-transparent was paper cut to shape and pasted onto the vellum. Apart from that, there are 10 drawings by a different artist in the album.

A.P. Mueller, a museum specialist at the State Historical Museum in Moscow, was the first to connect the album with the name of miniaturist de Châteaubourg. In 1935 Mueller published an extensive article on the miniaturist's drawings and clarified some facts of the artist's biography on the basis of the album and archival data<sup>4</sup>. However, the publication of the article went unnoticed in the Soviet Russia<sup>5</sup>, so in 1937 the album was put into the museum inventory as the drawings by an unknown artist. Only in 1954 did A.A. Rusakova attribute the drawings to de Châteaubourg.

There is scant information on the artist. According to dictionaries of art and artists, Charles-Joseph de La Celle, chevalier de Châteaubourg, son of Charles-François and La Celle de Châteaubourg and Jeanne-Marie Le Clerc de Kergolher, was born in Nantes in 1757. He served in the corps of the Prince of Condé and emigrated to Britain in 1792. De Châteaubourg worked as a miniaturist in the German states in 1794-1799. He lived in Saint Petersburg in 1800-1805. In 1806 he returned to Nantes, where he passed away in 1837.

D. M. Migdal, a museum specialist at the Russian Museum who worked with the album, suggested that the miniaturist had been born at the beginning of the 1770s. In 2001 E.I. Gavrilova published an article dedicated to de Châteaubourg<sup>6</sup>. The scholar claimed that the artist had died in Saint Petersburg in 1808, while his son, a pupil of Jean-Baptiste Isabey<sup>7</sup>, had lived and worked in Nantes till 1837. Gavrilova came to this conclusion after being able to discover an advertisement in *Le Vedemont* from 1808 about selling the pictures and things which belonged to the deceased chevalier de Châteaubourg<sup>8</sup>. In 1816, an Italian, Antonio Francesco Spada sheds light upon the biography of the artist who had worked in Russia. His book, « Russian Political, Literary, Historical and Obituary Ephemerides », was a sort of almanac containing descriptions of different events for each day of the year. April 14, 1806 entered as the date of death of Dominique Emmanuel La Selle, chevalier de Châteaubourg<sup>9</sup>, a nobleman of Brittany, who had taken up residence in Russia many years before. « Chevalier de Châteaubourg, who had spent several years in emigration in Germany, settled down in Saint Petersburg. Unwilling to be a burden to anyone, he applied himself to painting miniature portraits, which provided him with a comfortable income. Being naturally cheerful and disposed to laugh, he took a philosophical approach to life, was interested in arts, did not neglect literature, to which many a modern artist was a stranger. His affability ensured he was welcome in almost every noble house of this capital, he was capable of pleasing and took great joy in it. Hardly had he received word of his being removed from the list of émigrés and the restitution of property<sup>10</sup> when he died of fever at the age of 40, leaving those who knew him to mourn the loss<sup>11</sup> ».

Knowing the artist's exact name made it possible to clarify the facts of his biography. Emmanuel de Châteaubourg was born October 18, 1762 in Rennes. In 1773, he became a page at court. In 1778, he went into military service. In 1785, as a sub-lieutenant, he served under Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé in Vendée<sup>12</sup>. After the revolution, he joined the Nobiliary Infantry Regiment (Le régiment noble à pied) of the corps of the Prince of Condé. He held the rank of lieutenant<sup>13</sup> when he retired in 1791 and emigrated to Britain.

In the period from 1794 to 1797 de Châteaubourg travelled around the German states growing in fame as a miniaturist, until he finally settled in Berlin in 1797. He received portrait commissions from numerous German