

For Immediate Release

THE ART OF OBSERVATION | 18th – 20th century natural history watercolors  
April 25 - May 25, 2023

FRENCH TEXTILE DESIGNS | 20th century gouache on paper  
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**VICTORIA MUNROE**  
fine art

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On view through May 25, 2023, Victoria Munroe Fine Art is pleased to present two exhibitions: **THE ART OF OBSERVATION: 18th – 20th century natural history watercolors** and **FRENCH TEXTILE DESIGNS: 20th century gouache on paper**. Featuring original drawings, hand-colored prints, and rare albums, the exhibitions highlight the varied methods with which artists and designers have rendered the natural world and imagined design anew. Together these exhibitions illuminate the critical role of observation in the creation of patterns and study of our world.

**THE ART OF OBSERVATION: 18th – 20th century natural history watercolors** features illustrations of flora and fauna drawn or painted from observation. These lifelike images demonstrate the artists' considerable understanding of their mediums and subjects. With work spanning geographies from India to France, **THE ART OF OBSERVATION** highlights the deep artistic significance of the scientific endeavor to document and produce knowledge about the natural world.

Featured in the exhibition is a **Lucknow School** gouache painting of a sandpiper, c. 1790, resplendent botanical paintings by **Barbara Regina Dietzsch** (1706-1783) in gouache on vellum, and natural history watercolors of insects such as **Jean-Gabriel Prêtre's** (1775-1840) *Study of Wasps*, c. 1810. Lifelike paintings of fruit and vegetables include **Louis-Pierre Riocreux's** (1791-1872) *Poire Emile d'Heyot*, c. 1830, **Anthelme-Eugene Grobon's** (1820-1878) watercolors of apples, pears, and quince, and **Vincenzo Leonardi's** (1590-1646) *Studies of a Lemon*, c. 1621-1646, commissioned for Cassiano del Pozzo's Museo Cartaceo. Created as visual aids for science education in France, **Charles Yver's** vibrant watercolors of marine life from his 1941 series *Petit Atlas des Poissons* at once reflect the roots of natural history drawing and convey the integral role of the visual arts in the study of the natural world.

Rare albums include *Algues marines*, an 18th century French herbaria album of seaweed specimens and *Papillons*, a 19th century album of butterflies with hundreds of specimens organized by typology and carefully pressed to the pages. A rare album by **Sarah Bowdich** (1791-1856), *Fresh Water Fishes of Great Britain*, 1828 (published in parts and limited to 50 subscribers) features over twenty of her original illustrations of freshwater fish made with graphite, watercolor, and gouache. Through close observation of the "brilliance of the colours, and the shape and thickness of the Fish," as she writes, Bowdich worked "from the living Fish immediately as it came from the water it inhabited; so that no tint has been lost or deadened, either by changing the quality of that element, or by exposure to the atmosphere."

**FRENCH TEXTILE DESIGNS: 20th century gouache on paper** presents over ninety gouache designs for textiles and decorative arts, each one innovative in its use of geometry, palette, pattern repetition, and global scope of symbolism and references.

Among the artists and designers are **Atelier Tony-Pichon** (1891-1962), **Maurice Leonard** (1899-1971), **Emile Didier** (Lyon, 1890-1965), the **Ecole Lyonnaise**, as well as seventy works produced by the Parisian atelier of **Arthur Litt** (1905-1961), which was a leading contributor to the textile and tapestry design industry from the 1920s until World War II. Painted in gouache on paper, these designs propose a range of fabric patterns – from Lyonnais jacquard and brocade to chintz, fleur-de-lis, gingham, and the inventive, abstract designs of Atelier Litt.

Several gouache designs for decorative arts illuminate a shared attraction to pattern and palette in modern France, such as designs for Sèvres porcelain by **Anne-Marie Fontaine** (d. 1940), and jewelry designs by **Andrée Legrand** (Paris, active c. 1910-1930s) and the Parisian atelier of **Paul and Raymond Templier** (1891-1968), all c. 1930.

A 19th century French sample album, *Calques Cachemires* (Cashmere Designs) contains swatches of fabric mounted on paper and bound as a book. Such a portfolio both demonstrated the designer's knowledge of their craft and enabled portability of these floral or paisley – or paisley – designs for promotion.

The brilliance of the natural world long captivated natural history artists and designers into the modern era.

(over)



Lucknow School  
A Sandpiper, possible a juvenile  
Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) in a river  
landscape, c. 1790



Sarah Bowdich (1791-1856)  
*Fresh Water Fishes of Great Britain, D.25, Flounder,*  
c. 1828



Barbara Regina Dietzsch  
(1706-1783)  
*Red Carnation*, 18th century



Charles Yver  
*Petit Atlas des Poissons, Volume I, Plate  
III: Sélaciens, Mourine, Raie brunette,  
Raie capucin & Torpille ocellée*, 1941



French  
*Album of Algues marines*, c. 18th century



Jean-Gabriel Prêtre (1775-1840)  
*Study of Wasps*, c. 1810



Maurice Leonard  
(1899-1971)  
Two textile designs,  
early 20th century



French  
*Calques Cachemires: Sommaire du Present  
Numero; Faits Mémorables*, 19th century



Atelier Arthur Litt  
(Paris, 1905-1961)  
*Textile Design (Dessins  
Industriels 23966)*,  
c. 1920-1940



Emile Didier  
(Lyon, 1890-1965)  
*Lace design*,  
early 20th century