An Unknown Work by Pierre Puget: The Deydé Funerary Chapel in Montpellier Cathedral

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Saint-Pierre Cathedral in Montpellier suffered heavy damage during the Religious Wars at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, as well as during the siege of the city in 1622. In order to pay for needed repairs on the building, the cathedral chapter was willing to grant the side chapels to private individuals wishing to use them for their burials. Thus, on April 6, 1643, one of the city's principal dignitaries, Jean Deydé (1617–1687), counselor at the Cour des Comptes, Aides et Finances de Montpellier (the City Audit Office), was granted one of these chapels. This grant was described as "la troisième chapelle, devers le grand autel de l'église cathédrale Saint-Pierre, du côté de la rue qui descend vers la porte des Carmes, joignant la chapelle de Messieurs de Girard, trésorier général de France et de Rignac procureur général du roi," a space occupied now by the chapel of Saint-Roch. A few months later, on October 15, 1643, Jean Deydé commissioned Jacques Jourdan, a master sculptor of the city, to decorate his chapel. The chapel was accordingly decorated at its four corners by columns and corresponding pilasters supporting a cornice and enclosed by a balustrade made of Saint-Génies stone. This in turn supported a walnut baluster rising to the height of the cornice. Finally, an ornamental cartouche bearing the family arms was placed on the handrail. Jean Deydé dedicated the chapel to Saint Joseph, in memory of his father, Joseph Deydé, who had died on March 28, 1637, and was the first member of the family to be buried in this sepulchral space.

The exceptional decoration of the Deydé Chapel was realized at a later date in two distinct stages. The first reworking was rather limited, as the chapel's original plan was kept intact. Thus, between 1664 and 1666, the original paving stones were replaced by marble slabs and a painting was hung above the altar; it was meant either to fill an empty space or to replace a temporary painting. This work, representing The Angel Appearing to Joseph and Ordering Him to Flee (Figure 1), was commissioned by Jean Deydé from Nicolas Mignard d’Avignon (1606–1668), who had lived and worked in Paris since 1660, when the king had requested his services in the capital. The iconography illustrates perfectly the theme of the chapel's patron saint. Twenty years later, Mignard's painting was the first major decorative element to be installed in the Deydé Chapel.

In 1666 Jean Deydé lost his mother, Anne de Rignac, on May 28, and a son, François, on June 8. Both were buried in Saint-Pierre. These deaths led Jean Deydé to change the decoration of the family chapel. About 1668, he asked Pierre Puget (1620–1694), who was very skilled in directing such decorative enterprises and was then working in Genoa, to draw and execute a marble decoration for his chapel. In June 1668 Puget asked Francesco Massetti (1619–1687), one of Genoa’s major marble sculptors with whom he had been working regularly, to carry out his plans and execute the decoration intended for the chapel in Montpellier Cathedral over the next eight months. Because of various delays, resulting from the long blockade of the Mediterranean that followed the Holland war, the works for the Deydé Chapel could be installed only from May 1677 to April 1679. Beginning in May 1677, after repairs on the shell were completed, Jacques Massetti, a marble sculptor related to Francesco Massetti, with the help of Esprit Chaudi, a marble polisher and sorter from Marseilles, installed the famous marble paneling whose magnificence was much admired at the time. Thus for the most part the decorative elements had been executed in Genoa (Figure 2), by Francesco Massetti.
Jean Deydé, no doubt aware that Nicolas Mignard's Parisian painting of the previous decade did not fit into the new altar's decor, also asked Puget to arrange for a new one to be painted in Genoa. An artist working in the circle of Puget and Massetti, Giovanni Battista Carlone (1609–1684), painted The Flight into Egypt or The Miracle of the Dates (Figure 3), whose subject formed a logical complement to Mignard's painting.11 Carlone often worked on commissions for French patrons through Puget; in fact, in 1665, Puget had already asked him to paint two large works to be sent over the Alps, one representing the Three Graces and the other the

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("pilastres avec leur base et chapiteau, cadres de marbre, pavé, balustre de marbre noir et blanc"), but some also in Lyons ("grand degré de marbre noir"). In addition to assembling these elements, some decorative pieces were executed in situ by Jacques Massetti, such as the two festoons and the marble cross destined to rise above the altarpiece. The Deydé Chapel was the only private chapel in Saint-Pierre Cathedral to be decorated entirely in marble. The chapel of Richer de Belleval, for instance, was decorated with polychromed wood imitating marble; only the altar and its step were made of actual marble.10

Figure 1. Nicolas Mignard (1606–1668), The Angel Appearing to Joseph and Ordering Him to Flee. Oil on canvas, 320 x 260 cm. Montpellier, Saint-Pierre Cathedral (photo: J.-Cl. Jacques, Inv. Gen. © S.P.A.D.E.M.)
Three Fates. The Flight into Egypt may have been painted in the 1670s and hung after the sculptural decoration was installed.

On December 9, 1679, while new arrangements for the chapel were being completed, a tragic event occurred: the premature death of the Deydés' third child and only daughter, Constance, aged five. Her sudden death deeply affected her parents, particularly her father, who soon thereafter commissioned a marble bust of his young daughter. Constance Deydé's bust, now in a private collection, was probably intended to remain in an intimate setting (Figure 4). Indeed, in 1703 there is mention of it as being installed in a salon of the Deydé town house: "... plus deux pieds d'estal de marbre de différentes couleurs sur lesquels sont les bustes de feu M. Jean Deydé et Constance Deydé sa fille..."

According to Jean-René Gaborit (private communication), the artist was probably a Parisian sculptor born about 1650 and working in the circle of Antoine Coysevox (1640–1720).

Later, no doubt captivated by the evocative power of sculpture and in anticipation of his own death, Deydé commissioned three busts and a funerary urn. We owe to François Tronchin (1704–1798), a famous Swiss doctor, the only known description of the funerary sculptures in the Deydé Chapel, which he saw during his 1769 visit to Montpellier: "Il faut y admirer les bustes en marbre d'un Joseph [sic] Deydé et de sa femme par le Puget: ils sont à droite..."
Figure 5. Christophe Veyrier (1637–1689), Deydé Urn. Marble, h. ca. 100 cm. Private collection (photo: A. Morin)

dated it to just before March 1686. On the body of the urn, from left to right, are represented Justice, Concord, Charity, and Truth wearing mourning in obvious reference to Deydé’s qualities and demise. There was an epitaph above the urn, and flanking it were the busts of Jean Deydé and his wife, Catherine d’Ortolan (Figure 6), facing one another. Contrary to what Tronchin believed, the tomb he described is that of Jean Deydé and his wife and not, as he suggested, that of the patron’s parents. An engraved inscription on the back of the female bust reads “CATHERINA D’ORTOLAN/1684” (Figure 7). The lower part of that sculpture is a scroll carved into the depth of the marble, serving as a socle for the bust itself while concealing a system of peg and mortise that allows the sculpture to be attached to the wall. At the back of the bust we may also note a few hollow spaces meant to accommodate part of the chapel’s wall decoration (Figures 8, 9). The pendant bust of Jean Deydé has not been found but is known through plaster casts (Figure 10).

Although no document has surfaced to corroborate it, the attribution of these two busts to Veyrier is certain, because comparison with a more ambitious bust, also representing Jean Deydé, now in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 11), leaves no doubt as to their paternity. Tronchin, still discussing Puget, also saw the second bust in 1769: “Chez M. Deydé Conseiller à la Cour des Aides est un buste en marbre blanc de son grand-père par le Puget. Il est du même Deydé qui est à Saint Pierre, mais celui qui est chez le petit fils est le plus précieux: les vérités de nature, les détails, la mollesse de la chair, tout y est au plus haut point et je n’ai rien vu d’aussi beau du Puget.” The archives published by Klaus Herding clearly indicate that the bust was executed by Veyrier in 1684, along with its pedestal, which bears the Deydé coat of arms, thus made at the same time as the bust of Catherine d’Ortolan. The sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum, despite the corresponding dates of commission and execution, was not intended to be part of the chapel’s decorative program.

Puget’s role was fundamental in the elaboration of the chapel’s decor; not only did he furnish the drawing but he was also the project’s manager. At the end of the 1660s he put his Genoese friends Francesco Massetti and Giovanni Battista Carlone to work, and then, ten years later, again solicited by Jean Deydé, he entrusted his pupil and relative Christophe Veyrier with the realization of several
sculptures. In that way the invocation of Puget's glorious name by the descendants of Jean Deydé since the eighteenth century, as indicated by the attribution given by Tronchin, is not an abuse but merely a confusion as to the actual extent of Puget's intervention.

Jean Deydé died on October 4, 1687, and was buried in Saint-Pierre on October 14. In 1794, a little more than a century later, the Deydé Chapel was completely dismantled. Surprisingly enough, the destruction that began in the revolutionary period was only the spectacular final step of a deterioration process that had started as early as the 1770s. In 1764 the three children of Joseph Deydé (Jean Deydé's eldest son) died without heirs, and their first cousin Jean-François inherited the entire estate and family rights. While François Tronchin had seen Jean Deydé's bust and that of his wife along with the urn in the chapel in 1769, in 1776 Jérémie-Jacques Oberlin saw them in Jean-François Deydé's study, where he noticed "quelques bustes faits par Puget" and "une urne en marbre sculptée par Puget" on which "il y a les 4 vertus." After 1769 these sculptures had obviously been removed from the chapel and placed in the Deydé town house, along with two paintings.

In the inventory drawn up after Jean-François Deydé's death in 1778, there is mention of a "tableau long qui était ci devant dans la chapelle" in the "concert room" and of a "tableau qui était dans
Figure 10. After Christophe Veyrier, *Bust of Jean Deydé*. Plaster, h. 52 cm. Private collection (photo: author)

la chapelle faisant pendant au premier.” These works probably represented other episodes of Saint Joseph’s life and must have been fairly small in size, compared to the large paintings, to be able to hang in the “concert room,” which was already filled with works of art. Mignard’s painting and Carlone’s *Flight into Egypt* remained at Saint-Pierre Cathedral. The following year, Joseph-François de Malide, bishop of Montpellier, at the request of Jean-François Deydé, authorized the transfer of the “service de ladite chapelle de saint Joseph aux termes et clauses du testament dudit feu Jean Deydé dans son château de Grémian à condition qu’il y sera bâti et édifié une chapelle duement ornée et fournie d’ornements décents et de vases sacrés.”

Following Bishop de Malide’s ordinance, a chapel was doubtless built on the Deydés’ recently purchased Grémian estate, located near Cournonsec, west of Montpellier. Nothing remains, however, of the estate’s original appearance. It was greatly remodeled in the nineteenth century, when the Diocese of Hérault purchased it. The true reason that led Jean-François Deydé to request a transfer of service and why he moved part of the furnishings out of the family funerary chapel remains unknown, unless it was a consequence of the reconstruction of the cathedral choir from 1775. Between 1770 and 1780, although we do not know the end result, numerous plaster casts of the sculptures were made; some escaped the immediate family circle, in particular the casts of the funerary urn.

When Jean-François Deydé died on December 27, 1778, Bernard-Daniel, his eldest son, inherited the family estate. The latter, very much attached to his aristocratic status, adopted a hostile attitude in the early days of the Revolution. He violently disrupted a funeral procession led by a reformed priest and was forced to flee from Montpellier, leaving behind his wife and two children. He sought refuge in Lyons and, considered a traitorous émigré, died on the guillotine in 1793, during the Jacobin purge that followed the royalist rebellion in that city. In the meantime, in Montpellier his possessions were seized and sold at auction as national assets. The urn and its pedestal, along with the bust now in New York, were the only sculptures to be described, estimated at 36 and 45 livres, respectively, in the inventory of the furnishings and possessions of Deydé, drawn up on January 28, 1794. Yet there is no mention of any sculptures in the subsequent sale of February 29. We must conclude that, thanks to benevolent interventions, the Deydé sculptures es-

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*Figure 13. Deydé Chapel (Saint-Roch Chapel), Saint-Pierre Cathedral, Montpellier (photo: J.-Cl. Jacques, Inv. Gen. © S.P.A.D.E.M.)*
caped the auction block and all survive in the care of the direct heirs of Jean-François Deydé’s youngest daughter, Françoise-Anne-Gabrielle Campan (1742–1820).

The marble decoration of the Deydé Chapel was dismantled beginning on November 29, 1794. The marble-cutters Fabre and Grimes, whose function it was to remove marble sculptures from convent churches and private chapels on behalf of the district of Montpellier, left a report of the demolition in their books:

Au Temple de la Raison, ci-devant Saint-Pierre (du 9 frimaire [November 29]). Commencé à déplacer l’appui de communion en marbre, huit ouvriers ont fait une demi-journée; avoir fait recouper les armoiries en marbre qui était au mausolée du citoyen Deydé et au côté de l’autel, deux ouvriers ont fait cinq journées chacun; avoir déplacé les inscriptions et les avoir faites porter au magasin, avoir repavé en partie l’emplacement de l’appui de communion et fourni cinq pavés, pour faire porter les balustres et tout le marbre de l’autel à la Cousinasse fourni, six ouvriers pendant cinq jours; recommencé à la chapelle du citoyen Deydé à déplacer les marches, pavés, marche-pied de l’autel, et l’appui en marbre avec ses balustres, six ouvriers ont fait quatre journées; déplacé l’autel, douze tableaux et tous les cadres en marbre massif et porté le tout à la Cousinasse, six ouvriers ont fait chacun six journées.31

The two large paintings by Mignard and Carlon no doubt joined the other paintings taken from convent churches around Montpellier and stored in a room of the former Jesuit convent.

After the Concordat the Deydé Chapel became no more than a mere memory fading with time. However, a chapel devoted to Saint Joseph was reconstituted around the few works of art that survived (Figure 12). Thus, the altar was rebuilt around the main element of the bas-relief sculpted by Francesco Massetti and which had probably been handled with great care during the dismantling.32 Mignard’s painting was now privileged to take its place above the new altar, because it had been recovered by the Works of Saint-Pierre Cathedral well before Carlon’s work.33 In fact, Carlon’s painting was not seen in the cathedral until 1816, when it was obtained, through exchange, from the Blue Penitents, who had been the beneficiary of it at the time of the first redistribution of works of art.34 Hanging in the Saint-Joseph Chapel throughout the course of the nineteenth century, this work was then removed between the two world wars and placed in the adjoining chapel of the Guardian Angels. The new chapel devoted to Saint Joseph intentionally abandoned all references to the Deydés and was installed almost opposite the old chapel, in the former chapel of the Richer de Belleval,35 which, like the Deydé Chapel, had been completely dismantled in the autumn of 1794.36 The vacant space formerly occupied by the Deydé Chapel was allotted to the worship of Saint Roch. A few decorative elements that had not disappeared in 1794 survived only until 1890. At that time, it was decided to carry out “la démolition à la masse et au poinçon de la partie de la corniche établie à la hauteur des retombées des arrièrets et des formerets” as well as “la taille des moulures dans les arrièrets et formerets actuels pour obtenir le profil primitif.”37 Another restoration campaign meant to replace the masonry and windows took place in 1933 and 1934, resulting in the current appearance of the chapel of Saint Roch.38 Nonetheless, the opening of the Saint-Roch Chapel, with the intrados of its pointed arch decorated with motifs relating to the decoration of the Deydé urn, still attests to the existence of the exceptional Deydé Chapel (Figure 13).

The rediscovery of the Deydé Chapel’s history, in addition to clarifying the activity of Puget as entrepreneur, provides us with a significant example of the arrangement of seventeenth-century private chapels in Montpellier churches and their subsequent transformations.

NOTES

1. Archives Départementales de l’Hérault (henceforth ADH) series II E 95/1640 (Fages, notary); the receipt written by the chapter deputés in the amount of 400 livres is registered in the same notary register on May 1, 1643.

2. The location of the chapel is confirmed both by ADH series G 2017, and in a less precise manner by François Tronchin in 1769: “à droite à côté du choeur est la chapelle de M. Deydé” (cf. note 4). The location of all chapels is determined in relationship to the Gothic choir destroyed in 1775.

3. ADH series II E, fol. 146viii.

4. ADH series G 1748, fols. 475 (June 1664: authorization given by the chapter to remove the paving stones of the chapel in order to replace them with marble), 709 (1665, paving stones), and 733v (paving stones).
5. Signed and dated "N. Mignard inventit et pinxit Parisiis MDCLXXXIII"; A. Schnapper, Mignard d'Avignon (1606-1668) (Avignon, 1979) p. 112, no. 84. (Another copy of this painting, probably from the hand of a local painter. Jean Bestier [1754–1842], serves as an altarpiece in the funerary chapel of the château de la Mogère, near Montpellier, where the last direct descendants of the Deydés are buried); and p. 113, no. 85. (The study of the head used in the painting decorating the cathedral seems to come from the Deydé collection; in fact, the inventory drawn up after Jean-François Deydé's death in 1778 includes a statement by Abraham Fontanel dated March 2, 1776, "portant avoir deux têtes de vieillard et une Judith tenant la tête d'Holopherne estimé 28 louis, lequel Fontanel s'engage à vendre pour le compte du seigneur Deydé, ou de lui en fournir en compte de marchandises pour pareille valeur" at the time of the inheritance Fontanel could prove that he did not owe anything. Thus it is Fontanel himself who lent the sketch to the 1779 exhibition of the Société des Beaux-Arts de Montpellier that he organized, if indeed it is the one of the old man's head mentioned above.)

6. V. Belloni, La Grande scultura in marmo a Genova (secoli Xvili e Xviii) (Genoa, 1988) p. 135. The contract was drawn up on June 25, 1668, in Puget's house by Giovanni di Ferrari, notary (State Archives, Genoa).

7. Receipt dated April 23, 1679, for work completed by Jacopo Masietsi and Esprit Chaudi for Jean Deydé, ADH, II E 55/163, fol. 105v and 106v (Deranc, notary).


10. According to an invoice for restoration work executed in 1779 by the Montpellier painter Jean Costou (1719–1791) (ADH G 1991). The painted decoration included an altarpiece representing the Holy Family surrounded by two black-and-white figures of Saint Michael and Saint Roch, four small paintings of the Evangelists, and, finally, a large overhanging painting with angels bearing the cross.


13. White marble; H. 50 cm; W. 50 cm; D. 30 cm; private collection; the pedestal was replaced while the original epitaph carved in black marble remained: "FUIT TAM AMABILIS ET TANTAE SPEI/CHARISSIMA CONSTANTIA/ UT CONSTANS ET FIXA IN CORDE PATRIS AC MATRIS/PRETIOSA SEMPER PERMANEBIT/EIUS MEMORIA/ob... ec. 1679. AE.I.5 AN. 5 Men 7 Dl."

14. Inventory drawn up after the death of Jean Deydé's eldest son, Joseph (private archives).

15. Tronchin ms. 196, fols. 60, 61, in the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire de Genève (This document was made available to me by Philippe Monnier).

16. Philippe de Chennevières, Recherches sur la vie et les ouvrages de quelques peintres provinciaux de l'ancienne France (Paris, 1847) I, p. 119, no. 16; Bougere's manuscript on Veyrier, no longer available, was probably given to Chennevières by "le docteur Pons."


18. White marble; H. ca. 100 cm; W. 50 cm; D. 40 cm; private collection.

19. White marble; H. 50 cm; W. 35 cm; D. 30 cm; ex coll. Jean Pétin, to whose memory I pay homage; present location unknown. (I also thank Jean-René Gaborit for his help in locating this bust.)

20. Between the two world wars the lost bust and that of Catherine d'Ortholan were sold on the art market in Marseilles.


22. White marble; H. 87 cm; inscription engraved at the back of the bust: "Joannes Deydæ æqu 67. 1684." The bust, sold by the heirs of Deydè (sale, Galerie Charpentier, Paris, April 1 and 2, 1954, no. 152, ill. pl. xxvi), was acquired by Wildenstein.

23. "... pour le prix du tout et valeur d'un buste ou portrait en relief en marbre dudit feu sieur conseiller ..." Herding, "Les Veyrier," document no. xxix and, for the pedestal, document nos. xix and xxii.

24. Municipal Archives of Montpellier, Register of the Parish of Notre Dame des Tables, 1687, fol. 30. Jean Deydé's will was drawn up on May 4, 1686 (ADH, Deranc, notary, II E 55/70), and stipulated the conditions governing the use of the chapel. Catherine d'Ortholan died on May 7, 1687, shortly before her husband.


27. Private archives.


29. All these plaster busts are in Montpellier. One after the New York bust of Jean Deydé is in the Musée Fabre, mentioned in the first handwritten catalogues of the museum when it was established in the city during the Revolution. André Joubin, who could not have had a very precise idea of the problems relating to the Deydé Chapel, was mistaken in his study of this cast (published in "Études sur le musée de Montpellier, la sculpture," Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne 41 [Jan.–May 1922] pp. 120–122, and Catalogue des peintures et sculptures exposées dans les galeries du Musée Fabre de la ville de Montpellier [Paris, 1926] p. 288, no. 964.
inv. 806–34). Another is in the Faculté de Médecine library and another in a private collection. Casts of the urn are in three private collections and the Société Archéologique. Of the bust of Jean Deydé (not found), three copies are in private collections. Of the bust of Catherine d’Ortholan (formerly in the Pépin collection), one copy is in a private collection. Jean Claparède suggested that all these casts may be attributed to the sculptor Joseph Journet of Vigan. The 1779 exhibition catalogue of the Société des Beaux-Arts de Montpellier included, under no. 6, a “urne en plâtre, forme antique” by Journet that could be the Deydé urn.

30. ADH, Q 479, and private archives.

31. État des dépenses faites par Fabre et Grimes pour déplacer les marbres des églises (March 9, 1795) ADH, Q 454.

32. The bas-relief is described formally in the contract drawn up between Puget and Francesco Massetti (cf. note 6).

33. In the beginning of 1804 a painting representing “Saint Joseph au moment où l’ange vient le prévenir que la sainte vierge a accouché de Jésus Christ” was withdrawn from the collection of the first Montpellier museum to be given to the White Penitents by the district administration. However, the dimensions of this work are too different from that of Mignard’s to be confused with it (329 x 205 cm; Archives Communales de Montpellier, P1/7, three letters, dated Nov. 30, Dec. 14, 1803, and Jan. 26, 1804).

34. F. Saurel, Marie-Nicolas Fournier, évêque de Montpellier, baron de la Contamine (Montpellier, 1892) pp. 307, 308.

35. Granted by the chapter on April 17, 1649. ADH, G 2017 (summary of the chapels granted at Saint-Pierre Cathedral).

