

Fêtes Italiennes: Beauvais Tapestries after Boucher in The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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FRANÇOIS BOUCHER went to Italy in 1727 when he was twenty-four, returning to France in 1731. He married in 1733 and became a member of the Academy in January, 1734. This is the year when he is said to have begun to supply designs for the tapestry manufactory at Beauvais,¹ where Nicolas Besnier, in partnership with Jean Baptiste Oudry, had just taken over the management of what was at the moment an unprofitable enterprise.² The earliest date recorded for the weaving of a set of tapestries after Boucher is 1736, but, as these were three of the large and complicated *Fêtes Italiennes*, he may well have begun to work on the designs two years earlier.

The designs of four small tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum may also date from the first years of Boucher's association with the manufactory (Figures 1–4). The pieces are upholstery for the backs and seats of chairs. Jules Aurèle Meissonnier has been suggested as the designer;³ they show the influence of his style, but they are very close to the plates of Boucher's *Premier Livre de Fontaines* (Figure 5), published in 1736, the year in which Meissonnier was godfather to Boucher's

son. Chalk drawings by Boucher, such as one for a fountain in the Cleveland Museum of Art,⁴ may lie behind the rococo exuberance of the tapestry panels.

Between 1734 and, at the latest, 1757, Boucher designed six tapestry series for Beauvais, three of which are represented in the Metropolitan Museum (the *Fêtes Italiennes*, ten pieces; the *Amours des Dieux*, two pieces; and the *Fragments d'Opéra*, one piece). For one series, the *Tenture Chinoise*, he provided only sketches; they were shown in the 1742 Salon and are in the Musée des Beaux Arts, Besançon. The full-scale versions were painted by Dumont.⁵ What Boucher painted for the other five series can usually only be deduced from the tapestries, but he almost certainly never made the working cartoons that were cut into strips and put under the warps of the *basse-lisse* looms at Beauvais. True, an 1820 inventory lists “tableaux par Boucher” for four series, all in from three to eight strips,⁶ but we can be certain that these were copies; Boucher's painting for one of the subjects, Vertumnus and Pomona, exists undamaged in San Francisco.⁷

There is no evidence to indicate that Boucher had a

1. Musée du Louvre, *François Boucher, Gravures et Dessins*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, 1971) p. 12. I have taken all dates and known facts of Boucher's life from the biography in this catalogue.

2. Jules Badin, *La Manufacture de Tapisseries de Beauvais* (Paris, 1909) p. 29. The *Arrêt du Conseil* is dated March 23, 1734, but the appointment was as from the “premier janvier précédent.”

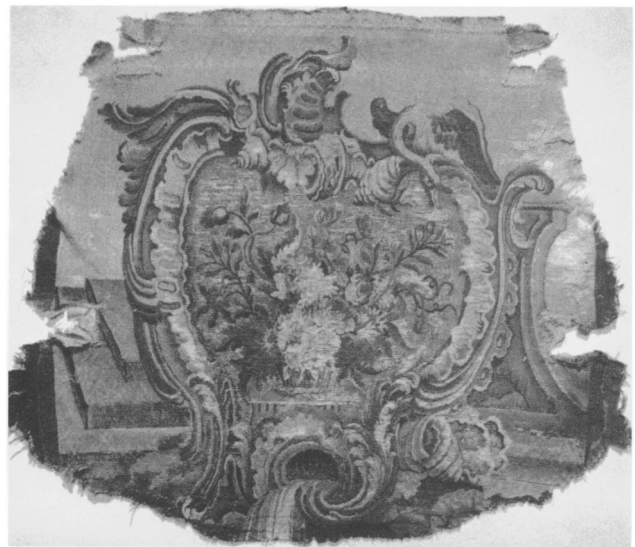
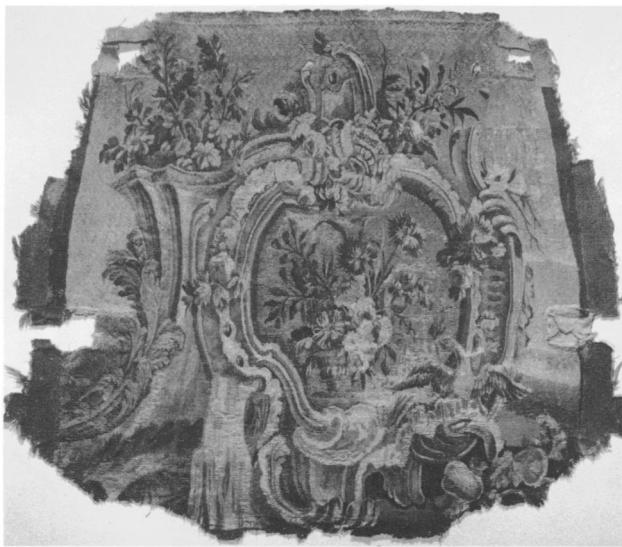
3. Charles Packer, *Paris Furniture by the Master Ebénistes* (Newport, England, 1956) p. 29, fig. 27. Meissonnier's sofa designed for Count Bielenski in 1735 is shown in a print as upholstered in a fabric, probably a brocaded silk, that is completely symmetrical in design (Dorothea Nyberg, *Meissonnier, an Eighteenth-century Maverick* [New York, 1969] folio 52).

4. National Gallery of Art, *François Boucher in North American Collections: 100 Drawings*, exhibition catalogue (Washington, 1973) no. 29.

5. This artist has been identified as Jean Joseph Dumons, a “peintre du Roy” at Aubusson from 1731 to 1754, who took Oudry's place at Beauvais in 1756 (Hôtel de Ville, *Trois Siècles de Tapisseries de Beauvais*, exhibition catalogue [Beauvais, 1964] p. 15).

6. Badin, *Manufacture*, p. 105.

7. Thomas C. Howe, “Vertumnus and Pomona by François Boucher,” *Bulletin, California Palace of the Legion of Honor* n.s. 1, no. 5 (March–April 1968). The painting is here compared to Boucher's version of the same subject made to be reproduced in Gobelins



FIGURES 1-4

Back and seat upholstery for two chairs. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), 1735-45. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 07.225.47

position at Beauvais or was under contract to produce a fixed number of designs every year. This had been the obligation of the official principal designer. One of these, Jacques Vigouroux-Duplessis, appointed in 1721 and paid by the king, was bound to furnish six designs yearly, “de 3 à 4 pieds de haut”; the director of the manufactory then had them copied “en grand” at his

own expense. Oudry, when he took over Duplessis’s position in 1726, was called on to provide yearly “six tableaux de trois à quatre pieds de hauteur, finis et de composition nouvelle, pour servir de modèles à faire les patrons d’une tenture de tapisseries de 18 aulnes” (the *aune* was between three and four *pieds*). Two years later, this stipulation was changed to a series 28 aunes

wide (about 108 feet) of four or eight paintings of the dimensions of the tapestries to be provided every three years.⁸ Oudry provided this material for several years, but his last designs were woven in the same year as Boucher's first, 1736, and no new designs by any other artist appeared until 1761. When, in 1737, Oudry was ordered to furnish designs for a *Psyche* series, it was Boucher who supplied them. It is clear that it was Oudry who employed Boucher for the twenty years of his work for the manufactory, its most prosperous period. When the Gobelins weavers wrote to the Directeur des Bâtiments in 1754, begging to have Boucher made their *surinspecteur*, or artistic supervisor, they said:

la Manufacture de Beauvais ne s'est soutenue depuis près de 20 ans que par les tableaux gratuits que luy a fait le S^r Boucher . . . Que ces ouvrages soient bien ou mal, le particulier peu connaisseur donnera toujours la préférence à la nouveauté et se contentera des sujets traités de la composition et du goust du dit Sieur Boucher.⁹

The tapestries made at the Gobelins manufactory were so superbly published by Maurice Fenaille between 1903 and 1923 that modern researchers can add very little to our knowledge of them. The study of Beauvais tapestries, on the other hand, is in a sorry state. Jules Badin published in 1909 the only general book on the subject, a single volume of little more than a hundred pages. Jules Guiffrey wrote in the introduction:

M. Badin ne s'est pas proposé d'écrire l'histoire complète et définitive de l'établissement qu'il administre avec beaucoup de distinction et compétence: il a voulu seulement apporter un abondant ensemble de documents précis et authentiques à l'écrivain qui se chargera de cette tâche.

This writer has never appeared; Hubert Delesalle, who should have filled the rôle, died before he had pub-

tapestry, with which it is not connected. It will be more fully discussed in a later article as one of the *Fragments d'Opéra* series. It has recently been claimed that traces of the vertical strips into which the canvas would have been divided are visible in a raking light (Anna G. Bennett, *Five Centuries of Tapestry from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco* [San Francisco, 1976] p. 7).

8. Badin, *Manufacture*, pp. 14, 19; Jean Locquin, "Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre de Jean-Baptiste Oudry," *Archives de l'Art français* 6 (1912) p. iv.



FIGURE 5

Fountain by Gabriel Huquier after François Boucher. Engraving. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dick Fund, 33.57.15 (7)

lished more than one tapestry series.¹⁰ Guiffrey goes on to explain the difference between the copious records of the Gobelins, which worked primarily for the king, and the inadequate documentation of Beauvais, which,

9. Maurice Fenaille, *Etat général des Tapisseries de la Manufacture des Gobelins IV* (Paris, 1907) p. 226.

10. Hubert Delesalle, "Les tapisseries des 'Jeux russiens,'" *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1947) pp. 127-132. I am deeply indebted to Mme Delesalle for enabling me to study her late husband's notes, as well as to Pierre Verlet, who made other manuscript material available to me, notably extracts from the Beauvais records made by Jean Ajalbert.

though called a royal manufactory, was actually a commercial enterprise.¹¹ Sad to say, Badin cannot be trusted to give us even these sketchy records accurately; his book is indispensable, but unreliable.

Thus, Badin names the subjects of Boucher's first series for Beauvais, the *Fêtes Italiennes*, or *Fêtes de Village à l'Italienne*, as follows:

1 ^{re}	pièce.	L'Opérateur, reproduit	12	fois
2 ^e	"	La Bohémienne, "	13	"
3 ^e	"	Les Chasseurs, "	16	"
4 ^e	"	La Pêcheuse, "	13	"
5 ^e	"	La Curiosité, "	2	"
6 ^e	"	Les Filles aux raisins,		
		reproduit	3	"
7 ^e	"	La Danse, "	12	"
8 ^e	"	La Collation, "	12	"
9 ^e	"	La Musique, "	11	"
10 ^e	"	Le Jardinier, "	11	"
11 ^e	"	La Bergère, "	5	"
12 ^e	"	Le Cabaretier, "	1	"
13 ^e	"	Le Perroquet, "	1	"
14 ^e	"	Le Marchand d'Oeufs,		
		reproduit	1	" ¹²

As a result, all later writers have repeated that the series consists of fourteen subjects, representing fourteen designs by Boucher. But in 1933 Roger Armand Weigert published an entry from a 1754 Beauvais inventory:

Les desseins en quatre tableaux des *Fêtes italiennes* peint par le sieur Boucher . . . Une seconde suite des *Fêtes italiennes*, peinte par le sieur Boucher par ordre de Monsieur Fagon, . . . contenant, avec les borderes, quatorze aunes de cours.¹³

Nos. 13 and 14 of Badin's list were not woven until 1762 and so could not have been counted in the 1754 inventory; as will be shown, they were not designed by Boucher for this series. Are we to think then that the "seconde suite" consisted of eight tableaux, which,

11. The existence of so many Gobelins tapestries, often as complete sets, in the French National Collection has also greatly facilitated the study of the manufactory. There is no comparable hoard of Beauvais tapestries, which even during the lifetime of the manufactory were distributed from Scotland to China.

12. Badin, *Manufacture*, p. 60. That important pieces should have been woven only once or twice when the other designs were made a dozen times is extremely unlikely. When one of these infrequently recorded pieces is the *Curiosité* (no. 5), said to have been woven twice, but of which at least nine examples are known



FIGURE 6

La Collation. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), 1762. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ann Payne Robertson, 64.145.3

with the four of the first suite, would make up Badin's remaining twelve subjects? This seems unlikely, as both suites measured fourteen running aunes, and the designs of one would hardly have been twice as wide as those of the other. It seems reasonable to suppose that

(combined with the *Opérateur*, no. 1), it is obvious that something is wrong. This article was completed before the publication of Alexandre Ananoff, *François Boucher* (Paris, 1976). Ananoff follows Badin in his listing of the *Fêtes Italiennes* tapestries, which are nos. 128-141 in his catalogue.

13. Roger Armand Weigert, "La Manufacture Royale de Tapisseries de Beauvais en 1754," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1933) p. 232. Louis Fagon, the son of Louis XIV's doctor, was head of the Conseil royal des finances.



FIGURE 7
La Bohémienne. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), 1762. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ann Payne Robertson, 64.145.2

there were only eight paintings; if they were all the same size, each would have been about thirteen feet wide, corresponding closely to the width of a fairly large tapestry of the series. Boucher was apparently fulfilling the stipulation of Oudry's contract, which called on him to furnish twenty-eight running aunes of designs every three years.

The first twelve subjects in Badin's list can, in fact, be fitted very easily into two groups of four pieces each. Nos. 11 and 12 almost certainly did not exist. No tapestry has been found that corresponds with the Cabaretier, and this must be another name for the Collation (Figure 6); the conventionally dressed young man

with a napkin over his shoulder, who serves the relaxed partygoers could well be an innkeeper. The Bergère has also never been identified; it is probably the Bohémienne (Figure 7), where the girl who is having her fortune told by the gypsy holds a shepherdess' *houlette*¹⁴ and is accompanied by sheep.¹⁵ No sets are recorded by Badin as containing a Cabaretier as well as a Collation, or a Bergère as well as a Bohémienne. The first Bergère is listed as woven in 1751, a late date to add a new subject to a series begun in 1736. Badin wrote that he obtained his information from "les registres de fabrication," which had preserved "la mention des dates et des prix d'acquisition avec les noms des acheteurs";¹⁶ these registers seem to be the records of payments to the weavers. It is quite understandable that the men might have given different names at different times to whatever they were working on at the moment. We find, in fact, "la pêche" for la Pêcheuse and "la vendange" and even "les 2 figures à qui on présente du fruit" for the Filles aux Raisins.¹⁷ The Opérateur (no. 1) and the Curiosité (no. 5) are listed as separate subjects, but they are invariably found together (Figure 8); it is hard, indeed, to see how they could have been separated. In the only set on Badin's list that has been identified, that of 1762, the eight pieces are named as including an Opérateur, but not a Curiosité; both subjects are actually present on a single tapestry.¹⁸ Similarly, the Chasseurs (no. 3) and the Filles aux Raisins (no. 6) are usually found combined (Figure 9), though the two subjects are less logically connected than the Opérateur and the Curiosité.

14. The *houlette* is a long stick with an iron scoop at one end, used to throw small stones or earth at sheep straying onto cultivated land (Wolfgang Jacobeit, *Schafhaltung und Schäfer im Zentral-europa bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* [Berlin, 1961] pp. 478–484). The blue bow on Boucher's shepherdess' *houlette* (Figure 7) is, of course, simply a decoration.

15. Similarly, the sixth subject of the Noble Pastorale series is listed by Badin as the Shepherdess, woven only once, in 1769, much later than any new Boucher design for Beauvais. Adolph S. Cavallo, *Tapestries of Europe and of Colonial Peru in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston I* (Boston, 1967) p. 179, says that no example has been found.

16. Badin, *Manufacture*, p. 32.

17. Delesalle notes and Ajalbert extracts. These were presumably taken from the same records used by Badin.

18. Men weaving the left side would have been paid for work on the Opérateur; those weaving the right side apparently were twice paid for work on the Curiosité, but in the great majority of cases the yardage they contributed was listed as the continuation of work on the Opérateur.



FIGURE 8

L'Opérateur and la Curiosité. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), 1762. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ann Payne Robertson, 64.145.1

The first four Boucher paintings would therefore seem to have been the combined *Opérateur* and *Curiosité* (Badin nos. 1 and 5) (Figure 8); the combined *Chasseurs* and *Filles aux Raisins* (nos. 3 and 6) (Figures 9, 10, 11); the *Bohémienne* (no. 2) (Figure 7); and the *Pêcheuse* (no. 4) (Figure 12). The date 1736 is found on several examples of the *Opérateur* and all four subjects had been woven by 1739. The second group of four would then consist of the *Collation* (no. 8) (Figure 6), first recorded in 1745; the *Jardinier* (no. 10) (Figure

13) of 1746; the *Danse* (no. 7) (Figures 14, 15) of 1744; and *Musique* (no. 9) (Figures 16, 17) of 1746.¹⁹ Certain stylistic differences between the two groups will be mentioned later. But can we be sure that any versions of these eight tapestries are faithful copies of the eight paintings that were in the manufactory in 1754? I do not think we can; there are too many incongruities. For instance, on the right side of all the known versions of

19. This division of the subjects into two groups of four was first made by Hubert Delesalle in an unpublished note.



FIGURE 9

Les Filles aux Raisins and Les Chasseurs. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century. Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Castagnola (photo: Brunel)

the Opérateur and Curiosité (Figure 8) are two men and a girl making music for their own pleasure; they could hardly be more out of place than in the middle of a noisy fair.²⁰ On the other hand, the traveling salesman showing his wares to two girls and the Savoyard with his marmot box who appear on some versions of the Danse (Figures 15, 18) would surely be much more at home with the charlatan and the peep show operator.²¹ It seems highly probable that Boucher's eight canvases showed various large and small groups of people that

could be fairly freely combined or separated to make attractive compositions of whatever size the purchaser needed.

20. The group is found as a separate panel in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu (Pierre Verlet, "Furniture and Objets d'art" in J. Paul Getty, *The Joys of Collecting* [New York, 1965] p. 155).

21. The seller is probably the "marchand bijoutier pour M. Camusat" recorded as woven between 1746 and 1753 (Ajalbert extracts). For Savoyards and their marmots, see Edgar Munhall, "Savoyards in French eighteenth-century art," *Apollo* 87 (1968) pp. 86–94.

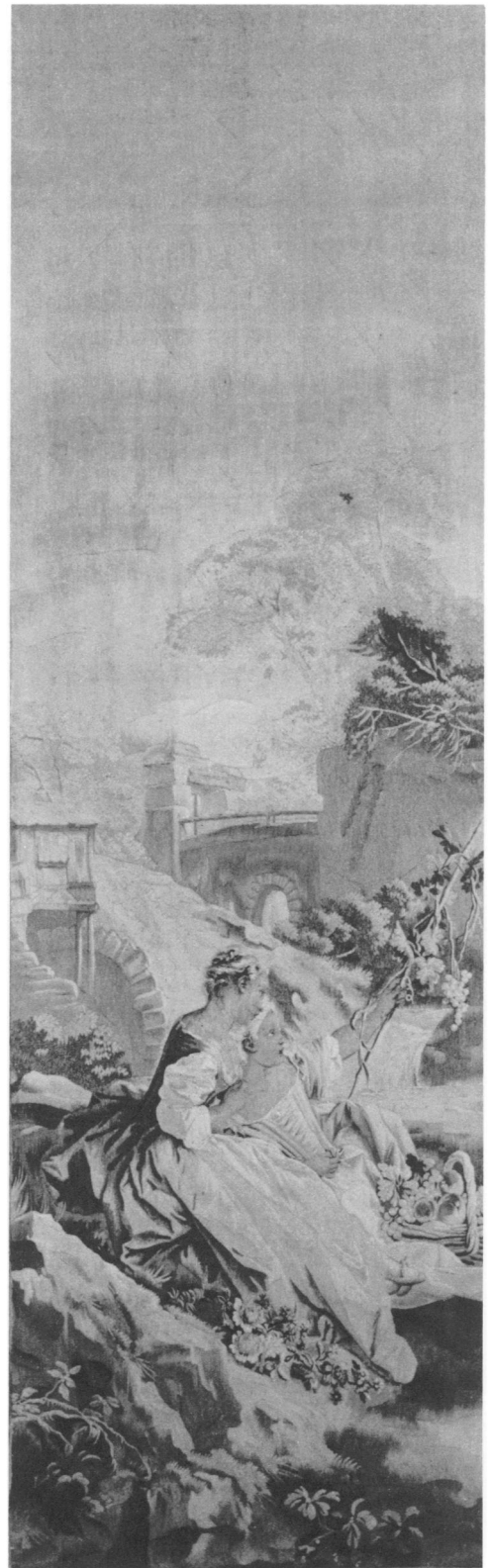


FIGURE 10

Le Chasseur. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), 1762. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ann Payne Robertson, 64.145.5

FIGURE 11

Les Filles aux Raisins. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), 1762. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ann Payne Robertson, 64.145.6

FIGURE 12

La Pêcheuse. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century. Dario Boccara collection, Paris





FIGURE 13

Le Jardinier. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), 1762. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ann Payne Robertson, 64.145.4



FIGURE 14

La Danse. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift W. Bayard Cutting, 42.34

This theory gains some support from two paintings that have recently been identified as related to *Fêtes Italiennes* tapestries.²² Though both appear to have been cut, they are too wide (nearly five feet) to be examples of the strips that were placed under the warps of the looms. One shows the shepherdess, gypsy, and sheep of the *Bohémienne* (Figure 19). The shepherdess' houlette is only sketchily indicated in the painting, but otherwise the figures have been very closely reproduced in the tapestries of this subject (Figure 20). These tapestries, however, always include an amorous couple and

part of another girl, rather awkwardly placed between them and the shepherdess; these figures and the ruined temple above them must have come from another part of the Boucher designs. Similarly, the painting of the *Pêcheuse* (Figure 21) shows the fishing girl alone, with the fountain above her, the basket of fish and the jug at her side, and the tub behind her;²³ in all the tapestries

22. In a private collection, New York.

23. It has been observed that this figure also appears in an early painting, *Pastoral Landscape* (Hermann Voss, "Boucher's Early Development—Addenda," *Burlington Magazine* 96 (1954) fig. 22).



FIGURE 15

La Danse. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century. Reproduced from the M. X sale catalogue, Galerie Georges Petit, May 23, 1927, no. 1

the space between her and the tub is occupied by a couple (Figure 12). Very little is known about the artists who were responsible for the working cartoons at Beauvais, but there is a list of the eight who were employed at the manufactory in 1724 under Duplessis.²⁴

It has been suggested that Boucher derived the idea for the *Fêtes Italiennes* from the print after Watteau called *Fêtes Venétiennes*.²⁵ Certainly the tapestry series shows the influence of Watteau, many of whose works were engraved by Boucher in the 1720s. Some Watteau prints show scenes like those of the *Fêtes Italiennes* and even some of their titles are similar to those of the tapestries: the *Colation* (sic), the *Galand Jardinier*, the

Disease d'Aventure, and the *Concert Champêtre*. An instance of direct borrowing can be cited; a little girl on her hands and knees in the *Danse* (Figure 14) is the

24. Badin, *Manufacture*, p. 19. The inventory lists the painters "qui travaillent actuellement à faire de nouveaux desseins," and, after describing Duplessis's "six tableaux, de 3 à 4 pieds de haut" for an *Isle de Cythère* series and "une exquise de six tableaux" for an *Histoire des Bohémiens*, adds, "Le sieur de Mérou, de sa part, fait travailler journellement à copier en grand par les peintres nommés cy-dessus ces deux nouveaux desseins." Noël Antoine de Mérou was director of the manufactory from 1722 to 1734.

25. Maurice Fenaille, *François Boucher* (Paris, 1925) p. 84. The print is here described as engraved by Boucher, but actually it is by Laurens Cars, the son of Boucher's master, Jean François Cars.



FIGURE 16

La Musique. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century. Musée Jacquemart-André, Abbaye de Chaâlis. (photo: courtesy Bulloz)

FIGURE 17

La Musique. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century. Formerly in the collection of Sir George Cooper. Reproduced from *Burlington Magazine* 78 (1941), pl. facing p. 139

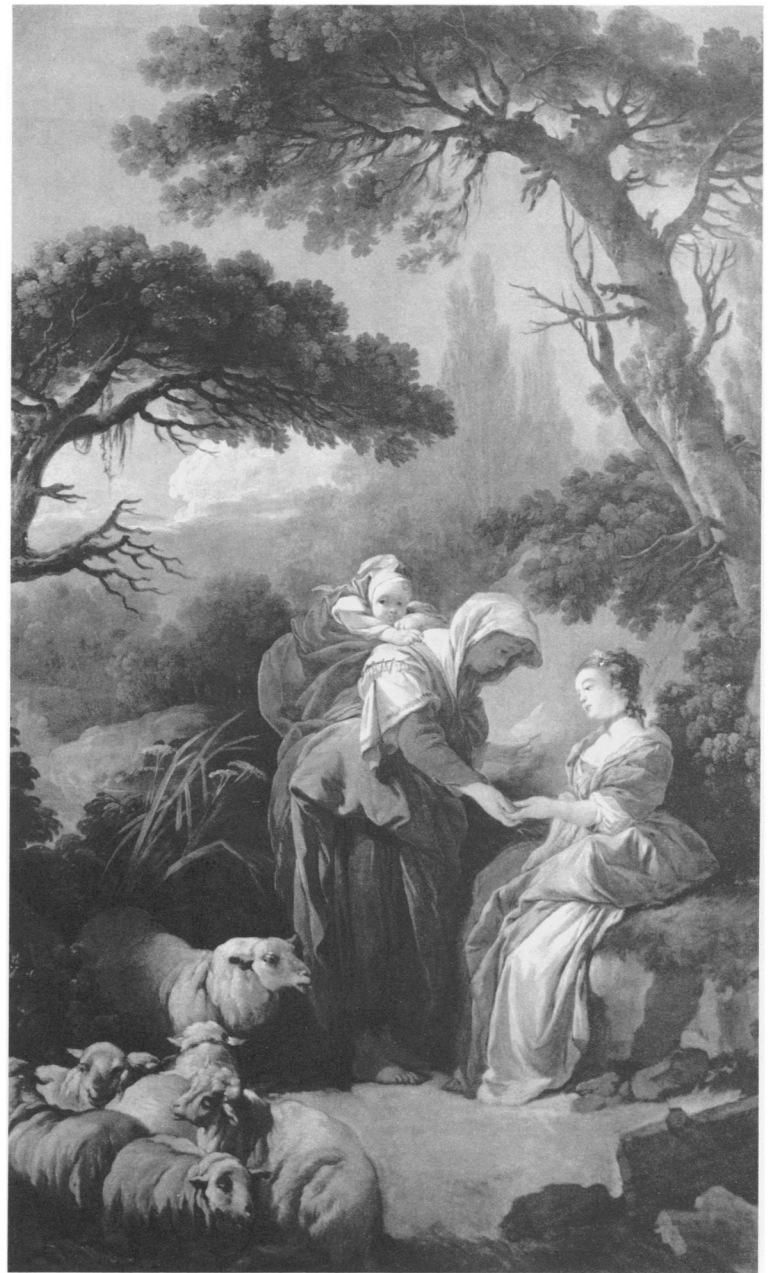


FIGURE 18

The Peddler and the Savoyard. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century. Reproduced from sale catalogue, Christie's, May 8, 1973, no. 116

FIGURE 19

La Bohémienne by François Boucher. Oil on canvas. Private collection, New York



FIGURE 20
La Bohémienne, detail of Figure 7

FIGURE 21
La Pêcheuse by François Boucher. Oil on canvas. Private collection, New York



same as one in Watteau's *Entretiens Amoureux* engraved by Liotard (Figure 22) and in his *Champs Elisées* engraved by Tardieu. But Boucher's *Fêtes* are more Italian than Watteau's are Venetian; umbrella pines and ruined classical temples appear in all four of the first group of tapestries, though not in any of the second. The word "fêtes" seems to have very little meaning except, perhaps, as indicating that the people depicted are enjoying themselves rather than working;

"holiday scenes" might be the best translation. But the first four subjects, at least, still show something of the realistic approach to country life that is found in Boucher's earliest works;²⁶ the women and children crowding round the entertainments offered at the fair (Figure 8) are peasants, not gentlefolk, and the gypsy

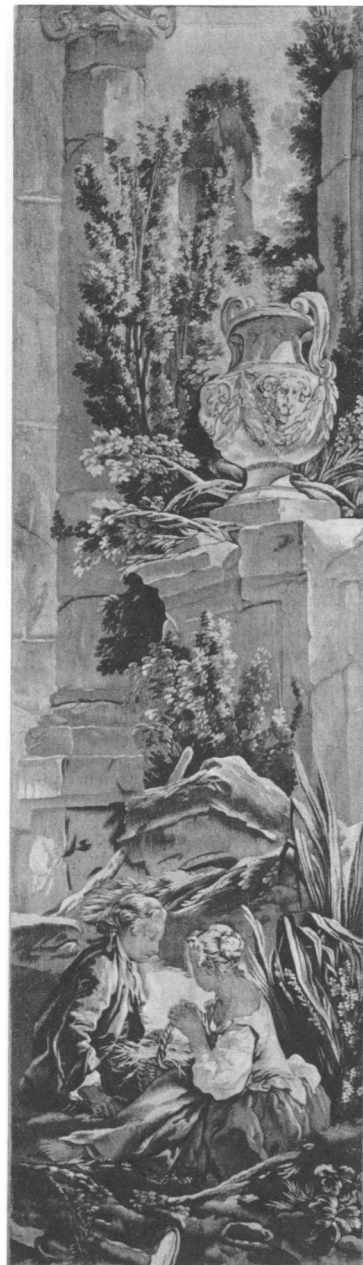
26. Hermann Voss, "François Boucher's Early Development," *Burlington Magazine* 95 (1953) pp. 81-93; Voss, "Boucher's Early Development—Addenda," pp. 206-210.



FIGURE 22
Entretiens Amoureux by Liotard after Watteau.
Engraving. British Museum, London (photo:
courtesy the Trustees of the British Museum)

FIGURE 23
Le Marchand d'Oeufs. Wool and silk tapestry.
French (Beauvais), 1762. The Metropolitan Mu-
seum of Art, Gift of Ann Payne Robertson,
64.145.8

FIGURE 24
Le Perroquet. Wool and silk tapestry. French
(Beauvais), 1762. The Metropolitan Museum of
Art, Gift of Ann Payne Robertson, 64.145.7



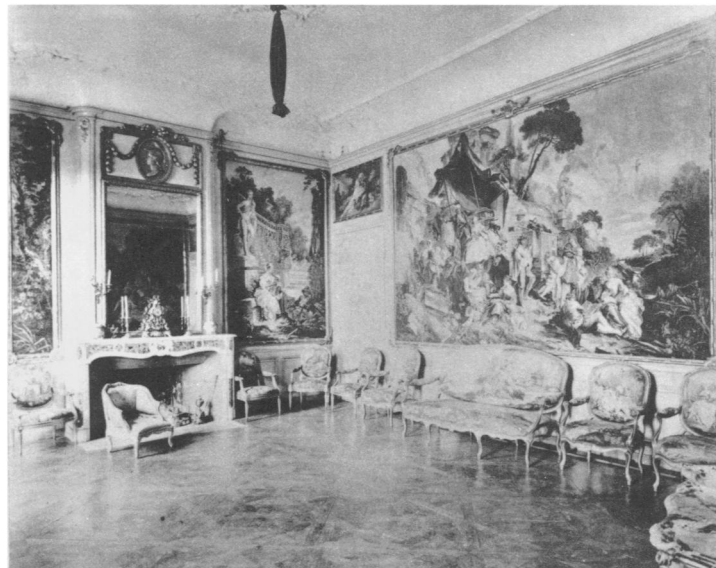
fortune-teller (Figure 20) has a ragged skirt and bare feet.

Badin, after listing the subjects of the *Fêtes Italiennes* and the number of times each was woven, for a total of 113 pieces, gives a chronological summary of the sets, from “1736. Commande de 3 pièces” to “1762. M. Vermonet, une pièce, 8^e,” amounting to 121 items. As has been said, only one set is known to have been kept together and has been identified.²⁷ It is the last woven,

eight pieces for Boulard de Gatellier²⁸ in 1762, now in the Metropolitan Museum. It includes three subjects of the first group, omitting the *Pêcheuse* and including the *Chasseurs* and the *Filles aux Raisins* as two narrow

27. The set in the Palazzo Venezia, Rome, may be that woven for Président Masson in 1739 (see note 43).

28. The family château is also spelled Gâtellier and there are other variations of the buyer's name; it is given by Badin and apparently in the manufactory records as Gatillon.



FIGURES 25, 26

Room in the Château de Gatellier, Saint-Denis-de-Cabanne, Loire. Photographs taken before 1898

panels (Figures 10, 11); two subjects from the second group, and two woven only for this set, the *Marchand d'Oeufs* (Badin no. 14) (Figure 23) and the *Perroquet* (no. 13) (Figure 24). The date, 1762, was very late to be weaving the *Fêtes Italiennes* series, then nearly thirty years old. Perhaps it was put on the looms because the working cartoons of the more recent Boucher series of the same type, the *Noble Pastorale*, were in use; a complete set of this series was woven for the king in 1762.

The *Fêtes Italiennes* remained at the Château de Gatellier until 1898 (Figures 25, 26).²⁹ A family tradition records that they and the tapestry-upholstered furniture acquired with them were saved in the French Revolution by being packed in straw to be sent as a present to Robespierre.³⁰ The hangings were bought by the dealer Duveen, who added borders to all the pieces; they had not been needed at the chateau where the tapestries were set into boiserie frames. In 1900 the set was acquired by R. W. Hudson, an Englishman known as the "Soap King"; after his death it was exhibited by the London dealer Frank Partridge in 1925. About this time it was purchased by George and Florence Blumenthal.³¹ It was given to the Metropolitan Museum by Ann Payne Robertson, formerly Mrs. Blumenthal, in 1964.

The largest piece in the set is the combined *Opérateur* and *Curiosité*, with the music-making trio on the right (Figure 8). The charlatan or quack, selling his nostrums with the help of a trumpeter, a pretty girl, and a monkey, is identified as an exotic character by his dark skin, his turban, and his fur-trimmed costume. The papers with seals attached, trodden on by the monkey, are presumably his credentials, or sworn testimonials to the efficacy of his wares. Rising high behind the group are the ruins of a round temple, reminiscent of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli. Below the quack's platform is the "*marchande de plaisirs*" or "*oublies*" (Figure 27). A seller of these little rolled wafers (Figure 28) carried them in a round container

29. Photographs of the tapestries *in situ* (Figures 25, 26) were provided by the present owner of the château, Vicomte Henri de Meaux. The pieces not visible, the *Marchand d'Oeufs*, the *Bohémienne*, and the *Filles aux Raisins*, were presumably on the window wall.

30. Information kindly given by Comte F. Rougane de Chanteloup, brother-in-law of the owner of the château. The furniture is in the Louvre (Pierre Verlet, "Un mobilier par Delanois couvert en tapisserie de Beauvais," *Bulletin des Musées de France* 11 [1946] pp. 13, 14). The designs of the upholstery are adapted from the tapestries of the *Noble Pastorale* series.

31. Stella Rubinstein-Bloch, *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal, New-York 6* (Paris, 1930) pls. 76–72.

with a “tourniquet,” or numbered disc, on top. In the center of this was a pointer that could be twirled; the digit at which it came to rest indicated the number of *plaisirs* the purchaser would receive for his money.³² Boucher designed a Sèvres soft-paste biscuit group of the same scene that was modeled by Falconet (Figure 29), and the subject was much used by the weavers of Aubusson. Boucher repeated the figure of the girl selling the *plaisirs* in his painting *A Man Offering Grapes to a Girl*, dated 1768, in the Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood.

The *Curiosité*, or Peep Show, is on the right of the tapestry (Figure 30). It is very large, a type that seems to have been more common in Italy than in France.³³ The young man is pulling the strings that change the pictures. The chimney on top with a pointed fluted roof is for the candle that provided the light; it is also seen in the comparable Sèvres group (Figure 31).³⁴ A gray tube ending in a yellow ring protrudes from the back of the machine; this perhaps contains a lens so that the peepshow could also be a magic lantern.³⁵ The name Boucher (in reverse) and the date 1736 are seen on the far left of the tapestry.

A print, *Foire de Campagne*, by Charles Nicolas

32. Henry d'Allemagne, *Musée rétrospectif de la Classe 100, Jeux, à l'Exposition universelle de 1900, à Paris II* (Paris, n.d.) pp. 121–127. Many illustrations are given, but none shows *plaisirs* lying on the tourniquet, as in the tapestry. This method of selling these objects was used from the sixteenth century until very recently (A. J. Bernet Kempers, “De Speler mit de ronde bus,” *Oud Holland* 87 (1973) pp. 240–242). I owe the illustration of a *plaisir* (Figure 28) to the kindness of Louise Mulder-Erkens.

33. Munhall, “Savoyards,” p. 91, pl. 1, figs. 1, 4, 6. Another very large example is seen in a painting by Alessandro Magnasco in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (*European Art in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* [Richmond, 1966] no. 25).

34. Carl Christian Dauterman, *The Wrightsman Collection IV* (New York, 1970) nos. 117A, B; *La Lanterne Magique, or la Curiosité, and la Marchande de Plaisirs, or le Tourniquet, or Lotterie*. The models were created by Etienne Maurice Falconet in 1757.

35. The peep show and magic lantern could be combined; an eighteenth-century print by P. Lélou shows a “merkwürdige Kombination von Guckkasten und Zauberlaterne.” But “Guckkasten auch zum Schattenspiel an der Wand benutzt werden kann” (Friedrich von Zglinicki, *Der Weg des Films* [Berlin, 1956] pp. 83–85).

36. S. Rocheblave, *Charles-Nicolas Cochin* (Paris, 1927) pl. xix.

FIGURE 28

Rebus, “Le plaisir poursuit ceux qui le fuient.” After the *Journal des Dames et des Desmoiselles* (Brussels, 1859–60) p. 32

Cochin *filis* after Boucher, shows many of the figures in the tapestry, noticeably the group round the tourniquet and the women and children beside the peep show.³⁶ The charlatan displays pictures and the musician plays a violin. The dancing peasants on the right are not related to the gentlefolk of the tapestry, the *Danse*. The print is dated 1740. The description of it in the catalogue of Cochin’s works compiled during his lifetime

FIGURE 27

La Marchande de Plaisirs, detail of *The Quack Doctor*. Wool and silk tapestry. French (Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century. Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino



RÉBUS

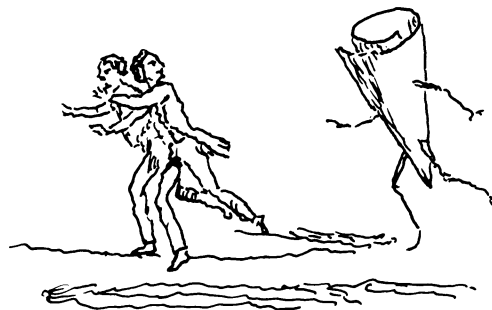




FIGURE 29

La Marchande de Plaisirs. Soft-paste biscuit. French (Sèvres), about 1760. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Ella Morris de Peyster, 58.60.10

says it was made for a “Marchand Tapissier” (upholsterer or interior decorator) called Blangy and was after “un tableau très médiocre, copié par Francisque sur une esquisse de Boucher, en sorte que M. Cochin fils, en faisant la réduction de ce tableau pour le graver, a été obligé de corriger toutes les figures qui étoient estropiées, & d’en faire pour ainsi dire un nouveau dessein.”³⁷ Neither Francisque’s painting nor Boucher’s sketch have been identified and it is not possible to say if the latter was a preliminary study for the tapestry.

Other examples of these two subjects on single tapestries are in the Palazzo Venezia, Rome; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond (marked A.C. for André Charron, who became head of the manufactory in 1753); the Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino; the Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation, Washington, D.C.; the Philadelphia Museum (combined with the Filles aux Raisins and the Chasseurs, with the arms of Rohan-Soubise); and a version from the Bache Collection in the Metropolitan Museum.³⁸ One was in

37. Charles Antoine Jombert, *Catalogue de l’Oeuvre de Ch. Nic. Cochin fils* (Paris, 1770) p. 27, no. 72.

38. Touring Club Italiano, *Roma I* (Milan, 1960) pl. 20; *European Art in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* (Richmond, 1966) no. 25; Robert R. Wark, *French Decorative Art in the Huntington Collection*

the Paul Dutasta sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, June 3, 4, 1926, no. 193, illus., and another in the François Coty sale, Galerie Jean Charpentier, Paris November 30–December 1, 1936, no. 110, illus. Badin lists twelve or thirteen weavings of the Opérateur, which probably include his two of the Curiosité, so that only three or four remain unaccounted for.

Only a single figure (Figure 10) from the Chasseurs and only two from the Filles aux Raisins (Figure 11) were included in the Gatellier set. Usually the two subjects, including another hunter and another girl, are somewhat incongruously combined and given a background of rustic structures and a huge classical temple and fountain: an example is in the Thyssen-Borne-

FIGURE 30

La Curiosité, detail of Figure 8

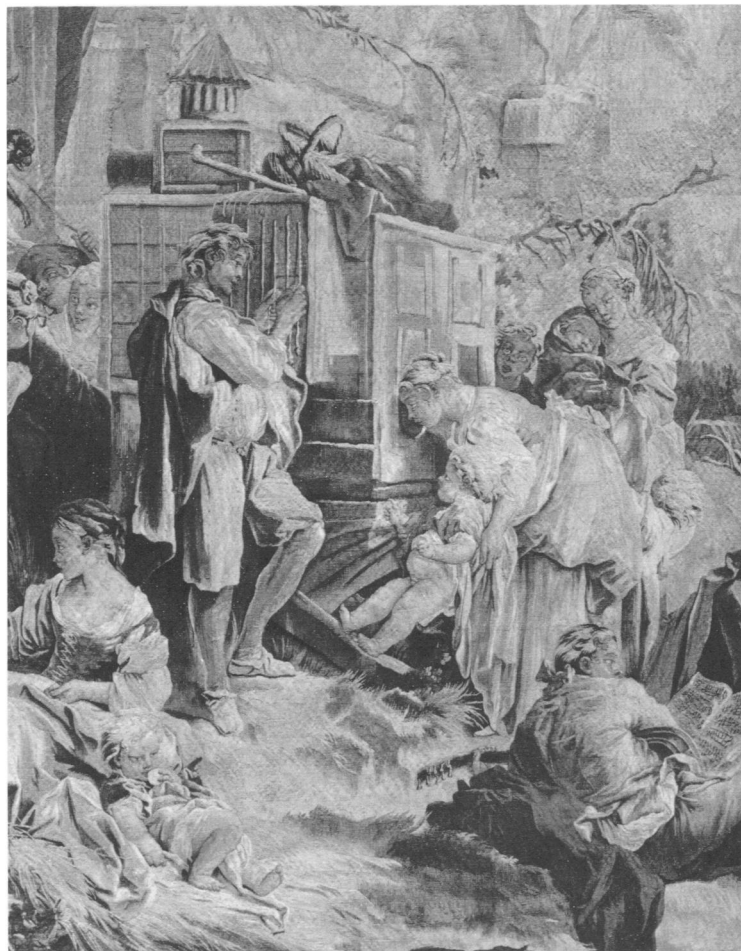




FIGURE 31

La Curiosité. Soft-paste biscuit. French (Sèvres), about 1760. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Ella Morris de Peyster, 58.60.11

misza Collection, Castagnola (Figure 9).³⁹ The combination is found in the Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino; the Jacquemart-André Museum, Paris; and the Philadelphia Museum (combined with the Opérateur and the Curiosité).⁴⁰ Other examples were in the Henry Say sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, November 30, 1908, no. 28, illus.; the Alfred Sussman sale at the same auction house, May 18, 19, 1922, no. 152, illus.; the Sir Anthony de Rothschild sale, Christie's, London, June 13, 1923, no. 89; the Ogden L. Mills sale, Parke-Bernet, New York, April 2, 1938, no. 151, illus.; the Dubernet-Douine sale, Galerie Charpentier, Paris,

(San Marino, 1961) fig. 1; "Living with Antiques: Hillwood, the Home of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert A. May," *Antiques* 82 (1962) p. 265; Joseph Downs, "A Beauvais Tapestry," *Pennsylvania Museum Bulletin*, 34 (March, 1929) pp. 4-7; Harry B. Wehle, "The Bache Collection on Loan," *MMA Bulletin* n.s. 1, (1942-43) p. 286.

39. Adolf Feulner, *Stiftung Schloss Rohoncz, III. Teil, Plastik und Kunsthandwerk* (Lugano-Castagnola, 1941) no. 595.

40. Wark, *French Decorative Art*, fig. 4; Musée Jacquemart-André, *Catalogue itinéraire* (Paris, n.d.) no. 1503.

41. Badin, *Manufacture*, pl. facing p. 24. Example from the G. sale. Erroneously called after Oudry.

42. Alexandre Benois, "La collection de Mr. Utheman à St. Petersburg," *Starye Gody* (1908) pl. facing p. 196.

43. Badin gives only one instance of the Chasseurs (no. 3) and the Filles aux Raisins (no. 6) appearing in the same set, that of

April 11, 12, 1946, no. 151, illus.; and the G. sale, Palais Galliera, Paris, June 12, 1973, no. 147, illus.⁴¹ One was formerly in the F. F. Utheman collection, St. Petersburg.⁴² The Chasseurs and the Filles aux Raisins are two separate tapestries in the Palazzo Venezia.⁴³ The Filles are alone on a tapestry in the Norton Simon Foundation sale, Parke-Bernet, May 7, 8, 1971, no. 231, illus., and the Chasseurs are on a tapestry owned by Mme. B., Paris.⁴⁴ Badin lists sixteen weavings for the Chasseurs and three for the Filles; three examples of the Filles alone are known and three of the Chasseurs, with eleven of the subjects combined.

The Bohémienne shows a young woman telling the fortune of a shepherdess; the kerchief and bundled-up baby on her back indicate that she is a gypsy (Figure 32).⁴⁵ The couple on the left appear to have no connection with the main scene, but they are found on all the tapestries of the subject and are not known to exist separately.

Other examples of the Bohémienne are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Huntington Art Gallery; the Palazzo Venezia; the M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco; the collection of the Prince de Ligne, Beloeil, Belgium (with the Rohan-Soubise arms) and, formerly, the collection of Mme L. Barzin, Paris.⁴⁶ Others were in the Sir Anthony de Rothschild sale, no. 89, illus. (with more sheep to left and right); the L. and A. Satori sale, Kende, Vienna, February 24, 1926, no. 115, illus.; a sale at the Galerie Charpentier, June 3, 4, 1958, no. 298, illus.; and a sale at Christie's, May 8, 1973, no. 116, illus. (with two figures, the fountain and the urn from the Pêcheuse added on the left). One from the collection of the Baronne Eugène de Rothschild was sold at Sotheby

1739 made for Président Masson. The other pieces are the Opérateur and Curiosité "en une seule" (the only time this is actually stated), the Bohémienne and the Pêcheuse. These are the subjects of the Palazzo Venezia tapestries (from the San Donato sale, Florence, March 15, 1880, no. 36), which may well be the Masson set.

44. F. J. B. Watson, "The Paris collections of Mme. B.," *Connoisseur* 155 (1964) p. 2.

45. François de Vaux de Foletier, "Iconographie des 'égyptiens': précisions sur le costume ancien des tsiganes," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6th ser., 68 (1966) pp. 165-172.

46. V. and C. Sternberg, *Exhibition of Important Tapestries* (London, 1965) no. 50, illus.; Wark, *French Decorative Art*, fig. 3; Joseph de Borchgrave d'Altena, *Castles of Belgium* (n.p., 1967) p. 46; *The Finest Rooms in France* (New York, 1967) p. 90.



FIGURE 32
Gypsy woman and baby, detail of Figure 7

Parke-Bernet Monaco, June 24, 1976, no. 118, illus.; it had previously been in the C. Ledyard Blair sale, Parke-Bernet, June 10, 1950, no. 322, illus. Badin lists from thirteen to eighteen weavings of the *Bohémienne* (including the *Bergère*) of which eleven are known to exist.

The *Pêcheuse* (Figure 12) is not in the Gatellier set at the Metropolitan Museum. It must not be confused with the *Pêcheur* of the Noble Pastoral series, which shows a boy holding a fishing rod. The reclining young man was to be used again in the *Collation* (Figure 6). There are examples of the *Pêcheuse* in the Huntington Art Gallery; the Palazzo Venezia; the Nissim de Camondo Museum, Paris; and the collection of the Prince de Ligne (with the Rohan-Soubise arms).⁴⁷ An unusually wide piece in the Anthony de Rothschild sale (no. 89) may be that owned by the late Dario Boccara, a Paris dealer, in 1976. The London dealer S. Franes owned a square example in the same year, and one from the Baronne Eugène de Rothschild collection was

47. Wark, *French Decorative Art*, fig. 12; Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, *Musée Nissim de Camondo* (Paris, 1973) p. 40, no. 175.

sold at Sotheby Parke-Bernet Monaco, June 24, 1976, no. 119. At least three others have appeared in sales. Badin lists thirteen weavings.

All the figures in these four tapestries, except the music-making trio in the *Opérateur*, could, with some slight effort of the imagination, be taken for country people. This is not the case with most of the actors in the second group of four tapestries, who are decidedly ladies and gentlemen amusing themselves in the country. In the *Collation* (Figure 33), two young men have adopted a most informal costume, perhaps even a fancy dress, very different from the conventional attire of the servant waiting on them. The straw hat with a pink ribbon lying on the ground at the left belongs to one of the men; Boucher's painting *Autumn*, in the Frick

FIGURE 33
La Collation, detail of Figure 6





FIGURE 34

Autumn by François Boucher. Oil on panel. The Frick Collection, New York (photo: copyright the Frick Collection)

Collection (Figure 34), shows such a hat with blue ribbons round the crown and brim lying on the ground near a boy, while his girl wears a similar one with pink ribbons.

The short-sleeved jackets of both gentlemen are unusual, but similar garments are worn by men in *Les Charmes de la Vie Champêtre*, in the Louvre, painted by Boucher in 1737, and his “*Pensent-ils aux Raisins?*” in the National Museum, Stockholm. The latter painting shows a barefoot boy wearing the jacket; the young gentlemen of the *Collation* are perhaps playing at being peasants. On the other hand, the Marquis de Sourches, in the 1759 painting by F. H. Drouais of him and his family at Versailles (Figure 35), wears a short-sleeved jacket as part of an elegant costume. One of the young men in the *Collation* offers his companions a string of ring-shaped *gimblettes*. The English word for these biscuits was apparently “gimblet”; Stephen Salisbury in Worcester, Mass., writing in 1767 to his brother in Boston, asked for ginger cakes and “double Twisted Gimblets.”⁴⁸ The little dog (Figure 36) appears in other works by Boucher, such as the painting

48. “New England Treasury,” *Apollo* 94 (1971) p. 428.

Spring, dated 1745, in the Wallace Collection (Figure 37).

There are examples of the *Collation* in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, and in the Huntington Gallery.⁴⁹ A version owned by Baron Guy de Rothschild is enlarged on the left to show more of the building; another conventionally dressed young man stands at the open door, and there is a birdcage on the wall. One from a private collection was lent to the exhibition *Trois Siècles de Tapisseries de Beauvais*, Hôtel de Ville, Beauvais, in 1964 (catalogue no. 22). It is curious that not more have come to light since, according to Badin,

49. *Walters Art Gallery Bulletin* 27 (March, 1975) illus.; Wark *French Decorative Art*, fig. 6.



FIGURE 35

Le Marquis de Sourches et sa Famille by F. H. Drouais. Oil on canvas. Musée de Versailles (photo: Musées Nationaux)



FIGURE 36
La Collation, detail of Figure 6

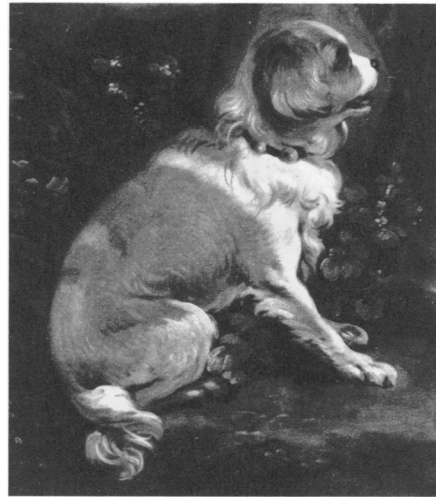


FIGURE 37
Spring by François Boucher, detail. Oil on canvas. The Wallace Collection, London



FIGURE 38
Le Galant Colporteur by François Boucher. Oil on canvas. Musée Baron Martin, Gray, Haute-Saône (photo: Studio André)

it was woven from twelve to fifteen times (including one weaving of the Cabaretier).

Only two examples of the Jardinier have been identified, the one in the Gatellier set (Figure 13) and another in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu.⁵⁰ The scene, however, is found combined with the Danse in a tapestry in the Comte Greffulhe sale, Sotheby's, London, July 23, 1937, no. 62, illus.; this, or a similar tapestry, is owned by Baron Guy de Rothschild. Badin records that it was woven eleven times.

The Gatellier set does not include the Danse, but there is an example of this tapestry in the Metropolitan Museum, the gift of W. Bayard Cutting (Figure 14).⁵¹ A reversed inscription in the lower right corner, "Boucher 1756," is a later insertion; the Danse is not known to have been woven after 1753. The musician

50. Ann Marian Jones, *A Handbook of the Decorative Arts in the J. Paul Getty Museum* (n.p., 1965) p. 13, no. A.11.

51. John G. Phillips, "A Tapestry after Boucher," *MMA Bulletin* n.s. 1 (1942-43) pp. 204, 205, illus.

plays a pipe and a *tambourin de Béarn*, a stringed drum or zither with heavy gut strings vibrated by a stick.⁵²

Wide versions of the tapestry, such as that in the M. X sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, May 23, 1927, no. 1, illus. (Figure 15), include a seated woman with three children on the left and a peddler with three customers on the right, at the foot of a flight of steps. An example of this design, in three separate pieces, was sold at Christie's, May 8, 1973, no. 116, illus.; the section of the right side that includes the peddler continues at right to show a Savoyard with his marmot box (Figure 18). A painting (1.61 sq. m.) of this part of the tapestry (reversed) is in the Musée Baron Martin, Gray (Figure 38).⁵³ The complete scene is combined with the Jardinier on a tapestry in the collection of Baron Guy de Rothschild. One owned by the dealer S. Stefanovitch in 1971 extends only from the woman with two children on the left to the dancers on the right, with part of a temple rising behind them.⁵⁴ Badin lists twelve or thirteen weavings.

There is no example of *Musique* in the Metropolitan Museum. One with eight figures is in the Abbaye de Chaâlis, owned by the Institut de France (Figure 16),⁵⁵ and a much larger piece from the collection of Sir George Cooper, formerly at Hursley Park, near Winchester, is on loan to the House of Lords (Figure 17).⁵⁶ The group of the Chaâlis example was on a tapestry in the X sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, May 23, 1927, no. 2, illus.; the five people on the right, with the fountain, on one sold at the Galerie Jean Charpentier, Paris, May 24, 1955, no. 109, illus., and the five people on the left on one in the C. Ledyard Blair sale, Parke-Bernet, June 10, 1950, no. 323, illus. The two standing musicians and the woman with a music book are found on screen panels in the Louvre, the Palazzo Bianco,

52. Information kindly given by Emanuel Winternitz.

53. A. P. de Mirimonde, "Un carton de tapisserie de Boucher," *La Revue des Arts* (1955) pp. 124-127.

54. Dario Boccara, *Les Belles Heures de la Tapisserie* (Paris, 1971) p. 185, illus.

55. Louis Gillet, "Institut de France, Musée Jacquemart-André, Abbaye de Chaâlis," *Les Arts* (July, 1914) p. 21, no. 371, illus.

56. "French Tapestries and British Portraits at Oxford," *Burlington Magazine* 78 (1941), p. 138. The tapestry was lent to the Ashmolean Museum with pieces of the Noble Pastorale also owned by Sir George Cooper, but it has a different border (compare Figure 39, an *entrefenêtre* from this Noble Pastorale set).



FIGURE 39
The Basket of Eggs. Wool and silk tapestry.
French (Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century. Formerly in the collection of Sir George Cooper.
Reproduced from *Les Arts* 19 (July, 1903) p. 17

Genoa,⁵⁷ in the Comte Greffulhe sale, Sotheby's, June 23, 1937, no. 59, illus., and the Harry Payne Whitney sale, Parke-Bernet, April 29, 1942, no. 107, illus. There is no trace of rusticity in these elegantly dressed aristocrats in their lush woodland setting.

Finally, there are two very narrow tapestries, woven only for the Gatellier set, the Marchand d'Oeufs (Figure 23) and the Perroquet (Figure 24). By the time this set was woven in 1762, Boucher was *surinspecteur* at the Gobelins manufactory and rector at the Academy; he

certainly would not have been asked to make new subjects for an old Beauvais series. Oudry had died in 1755 and Boucher's son-in-law, Deshayes, was now providing designs for the manufactory. The Marchand d'Oeufs makes use of a subject that was added to one set of the Noble Pastorale (Figure 39);⁵⁸ the vase is a variation of one found in the Joueur de Flûte of the same series (Figure 40). The Perroquet has nothing of Boucher in it and could probably have been turned out by any painter at the manufactory.



FIGURE 40
Vase, detail of the Flute Player.
Wool and silk tapestry. French
(Beauvais), mid-eighteenth century.
Henry E. Huntington
Library and Art Gallery, San
Marino

The Fêtes Italiennes: Their Place in Boucher's Oeuvre

REGINA SHOOLMAN SLATKIN

WHEN BOUCHER became associated with the Beauvais manufactory in 1734, he embarked on the most important project he had yet undertaken: furnishing designs for the series of tapestries known as the Fêtes Italiennes. His early work was marked by the dual influence of baroque Italy and seventeenth-century Holland.⁵⁹ It was the Fêtes Italiennes, first woven in 1736, that gave him the opportunity to synthesize on a large scale the Italian and Dutch elements.

57. Heinrich Göbel, *Wandteppiche, II. Teil, Die romanischen Länder II* (Leipzig, 1928) p. 257.

58. Maurice Vaucaire, "Tapisseries de Beauvais sur les cartons de François Boucher, la Noble Pastorale," *Les Arts* (June, 1903) p. 17. The set was then owned by Duveen Brothers. In 1913, it was in the Sir George Cooper collection, Hursley Park, Hampshire

While the designs for the Fêtes Italiennes are not specifically Italian in subject matter, they are filled with *souvenirs d'Italie*: ruined temples, crumbling archways, broken columns, sculptured fountains that lingered in Boucher's memory after his return from Italy, both as visual images of the Italian countryside and as the background of the baroque paintings he admired. It is the compositional scheme, however, that most recalls the Italian baroque. In the Opérateur, for in-

(W. G. Thomson, "The Beauvais Tapestries at Hursley Park," *Country Life* 34 [1913] p. 680). It is now on loan in the House of Lords from the Trustees of the Hursley Settlement. The Noble Pastorale was woven from 1755 to 1778.

59. Regina Shoolman Slatkin, "Two Early Drawings by François Boucher," *Master Drawings* 9 (1971) pp. 398-403.

stance (Figure 8), several groups are crowded into the foreground against a backdrop of intersecting tent and tree behind which rise, dramatically, the stately columns of an antique temple. Skillfully balancing various groups and focusing his attention on the pyramidal backdrop with its cascading effect, Boucher creates the operatic *mise-en-scène* that was to become the hallmark of his work.

Seventeenth-century Holland made its own, more direct contribution: the rustic genre drawings of Abraham Bloemaert, which Boucher owned, copied, and etched early in the thirties,⁶⁰ were the source for many pastoral motifs, some of which occur, as we shall see, in these early tapestry designs.

It has been suggested that the *Fêtes Italiennes* are based on the print of Watteau's *Fêtes Vénitiennes*,⁶¹ and surely Boucher's debt to Watteau is beyond dispute: figures like the violinist in the tapestry *La Musique* (Figure 17) clearly demonstrate what Boucher had learned from etching more than a hundred Watteau drawings fifteen years earlier. But rather than Watteau's tender, wistful, and subtly ambivalent charades, it is the celebration of life, the frolicking round of pleasures and pastimes that animated seventeenth-century Dutch art that are evoked in the *Fêtes Italiennes*. These scenes of hunting and fishing, dancing and music-making, picnicking, and flirting certainly occur in earlier *fêtes galantes* pictures (in Watteau and Pater, Lancret and de Troy, for instance), but it is in Dutch genre that Boucher's *fêtes* have their lusty counterpart, and it is there that models will be found for the figures that people his early canvases, book illustrations, and tapestry designs. As for the theme of the peep show—the charlatan selling his nostrums, the *marchand d'orviétans*—it was popularized by the seventeenth-century Dutch artist Karel du Jardin whose paintings, etched in the eighteenth century by Jean-Jacques de Boissieu, were much admired in France (Figures 41, 42). Boucher owned a great many of these prints, and his *Opérateur* (Figure 8) almost seems a composite of Karel du Jardin's *Troupe of Comedians* (Figure 41) with its peasants assembled about the showman's stage, com-

60. Regina Shoolman Slatkin, "Abraham Bloemaert and François Boucher: Affinity and Relationship," *Master Drawings* XIV, no. 3, (1976) pp. 247–260.

61. Fenaille, *François Boucher*, p. 84.

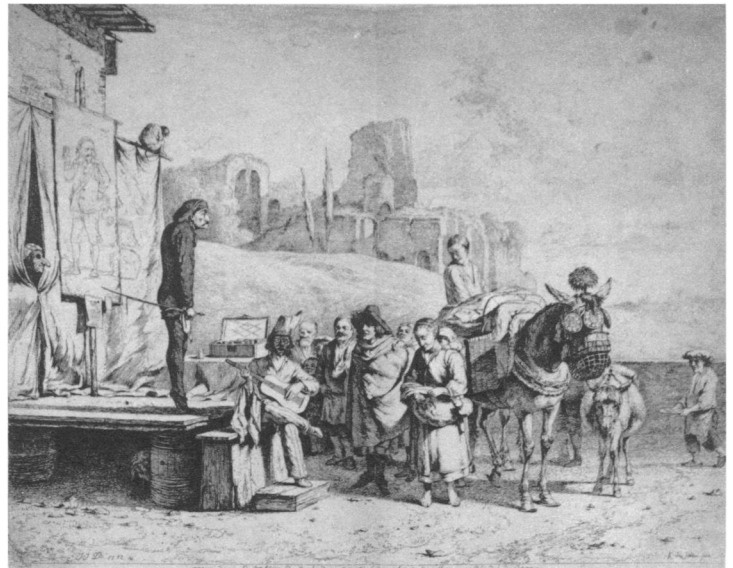


FIGURE 41
Troupe of Comedians by J. J. de Boissieu after Karel du Jardin. Etching. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. F. H. Hirschland, 56.504.2



FIGURE 42
Les Petits Charlatans by J. J. de Boissieu after Karel du Jardin. Etching. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Harvey D. Parker Collection (photo: courtesy Museum of Fine Arts)



FIGURE 43

Young Girl and Child by François Boucher. Black and red chalk heightened with white on blue gray paper. National Museum, Stockholm

FIGURE 44

Young Girl Seated by François Boucher. Black chalk. Formerly in the Heseltine Collection



plete with monkey and musician, and *Les Petits Charlatans* (Figure 42), with its showman costumed as an Oriental. Karel du Jardin's painting of the *Troupe of Comedians* was owned by Boucher's patron, the *Receveur-général des Finances*, Blondel de Gagny,⁶² who, like most eighteenth-century French collectors, was a devotee of seventeenth-century Dutch art.

How did Boucher arrive at elaborate compositions such as the *Opérateur*, which combined both Italian and Dutch sources? Did he assemble a number of individual motifs and figural groups and relate them to each other so that they fell into a given scheme? Or did

he, instead, select a central theme and build various elements around it, drawing on his rich repository of figure studies (borrowing wherever he pleased) and inventing others to suit the requirements of his subject? The complexity of design in such tapestries as the *Fêtes Italiennes*, with their frequently unrelated, though always charming and eye-filling motifs, suggests that he did both. While Boucher thriftily utilized elements that had served in other compositions, he allowed the artists of the Beauvais manufactory to incorporate individual units or figures into a given scheme, as needed. By combining and recombining these motifs a sense of overflowing richness was achieved, as in the *Opérateur*, but this was sometimes carried to the point of incongruity, when, for example, an elegant group of musicians was introduced into the hurly-burly of a country

62. The legend on de Boissieu's print reads: *gravé d'après Le Tableau de Karle du jardin tiré du cabinet de Monsieur Blondel de Gagny Receveur general Des Finances.*

fair. But as a rule Boucher managed to obtain a unity of design by using figures, often based on life studies, that were appropriate to the theme of the composition; these were disposed in such a way as to relate the various groups to one another. The Beauvais artists might extend or curtail the original design in order to produce tapestries of a certain dimension; they did so in several instances in the *Fêtes Italiennes*. Yet a pictorial extravaganza like the *Opérateur* is not uncommon as a totally conceived unit in Boucher's early work.

The *Opérateur* falls into two distinctly disparate groups: the elegantly dressed music-making trio at the right is quite unrelated to the *gens du peuple* who make up the rest of the gathering. This trio, undoubtedly conceived as a separate unit, does not appear to be based on surviving preparatory studies, as do certain other figures in the *Opérateur*. To begin with, at the extreme left edge of what may have been the original composition of the *Opérateur* are two country girls, standing spellbound before the nostrum-touting charlatan and his trumpeter. A drawing in the National Museum, Stockholm (Figure 43), which served as a preliminary study for these two figures, must have been done specifically for the *Opérateur*, for the young country-woman, barefoot, with basket on arm, holds out her right hand in a gesture directly related to the composition, as though offering a coin for the quack's medicine, while the little girl timidly clings to her.⁶³ In the final composition the gesture has been suppressed, since the outstretched arm would have interfered with the heads of the onlookers. This drawing, incidentally, suggests the affinity that existed between Bloemaert's rustic themes and Boucher's early work, for the figures of the two peasant girls could have come straight out of Bloemaert's sketchbook.

Seated in the center foreground of the *Opérateur* is a young peasant woman and her child, the *marchande de plaisirs*. She reaches with outstretched right hand for the coin with which the three little boys have paid for their confections (Figure 27). A drawing, formerly in the Heseltine collection, of a young woman in exactly the same attitude (Figure 44) must be a specific study for the figure of the *marchande*. Of the three little boys,

the middle one derives from a drawing engraved by Demarteau (Figure 45) when it was in the Bergeret collection; very likely, life studies also existed for the other two boys.

Just below the figure of the *Opérateur* is a young girl, watching, chin in hand, who closely resembles the young girl in a similar pose in a drawing at the Boymans Museum (Figure 46). The young woman with the sleeping infant to the right of the peep show recalls the drawing of a mother, infant nestling against her shoulder, which remained in Boucher's possession until the end of his life, when it was engraved (in 1769) by Bonnet (Figure 47).⁶⁴ A study must certainly have existed for the owner of the peep show, for Boucher used the figure of the curly-haired youth in knee-breeches

64. The legend on Bonnet's print, dated 1769, reads: *Tiré du Cabinet de Monsieur Boucher Premier Peintre du Roy*. Boucher died the following year.

FIGURE 45

Young Boy by Gilles Demarteau after François Boucher. Crayon manner engraving



63. A close copy of the Stockholm drawing was in the Doucet collection sale, Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, *Collection Jacques Doucet* (5 June 1912) no. 15.



FIGURE 46
Young Girl by François Boucher. Black chalk.
Boymans Museum, Rotterdam (photo: courtesy
Boymans Museum)



FIGURE 47
Mother and Child by Louis Bonnet after François
Boucher. Chalk manner engraving. Cabinet des
Dessins, Musée du Louvre (photo: Musées Na-
tionaux)



FIGURE 48
Study of a young Man by François Boucher.
Black chalk heightened with white. Formerly in
the Havemeyer collection

FIGURE 49

Illustration by I. Depollier after François Boucher for “Le Calendrier des Vieillards” from the *Contes* of La Fontaine. Engraving

and flowing mantle (Figure 48) in a later composition, the *Pipée aux Oiseaux* (1748), based on the painting now in the Getty Museum. Here the young man’s pose is somewhat different, but he is clearly the same model, drawn from life.

We know of no studies for the charlatan, but the exotic turbaned figure is surely the same pseudo-Oriental whom Boucher depicted in an illustration to La Fontaine’s “Le Calendrier des Vieillards,” executed about the same time as the Beauvais designs for the *Fêtes Italiennes* (Figure 49).⁶⁵ As for the charlatan’s pretty female companion, one is tempted to connect her with the subject of an engraving by Cochin that the Goncourts describe as: “Simone, femme célèbre d’un opérateur ambulante, à cheval avec son singe, accompagnée de deux trompettes . . .”⁶⁶ In Figure 49 the monkey is very much in evidence, as he is in the tapestry design. Did Boucher, who loved fairgrounds, persuade a quack, his wife, the trumpeter, and the monkey to pose for him? If so, the picaresque charlatan served as a model at least once more, for he appears, wearing his turban and fur-trimmed coat, astride a magnificent Rubenesque white horse, in the *Chasse aux Tigres* (Musée de Picardie, Amiens), which dates from 1736, the year of the La Fontaine illustrations and of the first weavings of the *Fêtes Italiennes* (Figure 50).

La Collation (Figure 6) is recorded as having been woven for the first time in 1745, but the design must be considered, on stylistic grounds, a work of the thirties.

65. See *François Boucher in North American Collections* (Washington, 1973) p. 29 for a discussion of the dating of Boucher’s illustrations for the *Contes de La Fontaine*.

66. E. and J. de Goncourt, *L’Art du XVIII^{ème} Siècle* (Paris, 1880).

FIGURE 50

La Chasse au Tigre by François Boucher. Oil. Musée de Picardie, Amiens (photo: Archives Photographiques des Monuments Historiques)





FIGURE 51
Reclining Young Man by François Boucher. Red chalk. Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre (photo: Musées Nationaux)

At the extreme left of the usual versions of the Collation (Figure 33) is the reclining figure of a young man, elegantly dressed, who holds in his hands the *gimblettes*, which he offers to his companions. The study for this figure in the Cabinet des Dessins, Louvre, is one of the most attractive drawings from Boucher's hand (Figure 51), clearly done with this particular group in mind. This crisp red chalk drawing is closely related to the Molière illustrations of 1734, for it has the same lively touch and the same feeling for contemporary costume design.

Immediately behind the young man holding out the *gimblettes* is the *serviteur* or valet who offers the picnickers beverage on a tray. He is a familiar figure whom Boucher sketched, probably from life, in a drawing in the Rijksmuseum of a young man carrying a platter of food (Figure 52), though here his position is somewhat different and his appearance (rings in his ears) is foreign—Moorish, perhaps, or vaguely Oriental.⁶⁷ He is also seen, wearing a kerchief on his head, in a painting of the same period, the *Pique-nique* (French private collection).⁶⁸ Here is yet another instance of a recurring



FIGURE 52
Young Valet by François Boucher. Red and black chalk. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (photo: courtesy Rijksmuseum)

motif in Boucher's early work, which often helps to establish a chronological sequence.

Many parallels can be established between the figures in the Beauvais tapestries and those that occur in other Boucher works of the thirties; often this can be done through prints after lost original drawings. One such instance is the engraving by J. M. Liotard after Boucher's *La Bergère Laborieuse* (Figure 53), which must have been done after a drawing of the central figure in the Collation, the young woman holding a parasol. Her long-waisted, tight-fitting bodice and full skirt have been accurately rendered in the engraving, but in order to transform her from a lady of leisure into an industrious shepherdess, the engraver has changed her elegant parasol into a homely distaff. There is always the possibility, of course, that Boucher's original drawing corresponded exactly to Liotard's engraving, and

67. Rijksmuseum, *French Drawings of the 18th century*, exhibition catalogue (Amsterdam, June 8–August 4, 1974) p. 130, no. 9. "Seen from a low viewpoint—that of the diners—the page, who has rings in his ears and must be a Moor or an oriental . . ."

68. *François Boucher in North American Collections*, p. 30.

that Boucher himself changed the shepherdess into a lady holding a parasol, but whatever the sequence, there is evidence here to show that he used individual and group figure drawings to build up his complex compositions. The first certain weaving of the *Bohémienne* (Figure 7) was completed by 1738, but the design must have been done several years before, since it is full of the baroque inventions—gnarled trees, antique columns, a herm—that characterized Boucher's early work. The gypsy fortune-teller carrying an infant slung over her back derives from a drawing of a mother and two children, sketched in rough but vigorous outline (Figure 54). The *Bohémienne* proved such a favorite subject that Boucher used it later on in several other compositions.



FIGURE 53
La Bergère Laborieuse by J. M. Liotard after
François Boucher. Engraving

Nowhere is Boucher's debt to Watteau more strikingly apparent than in his brilliant study of a violinist (Figure 55), a masterpiece of eighteenth-century draughtsmanship, which served as a model for one of the figures in *La Musique* (Figure 17). He is seated at the right of the trio, glancing at the music score held by the vocalist. Behind her stands the flutist whom Boucher has also sketched, full length (Figure 56), though in the tapestry he is half hidden. There can be little doubt that these figures are done from life, so fresh and sparkling is their appearance.

FIGURE 54
Peasant Woman and Children by François Boucher. Black chalk. Sir Robert Witt collection
(photo: courtesy Courtauld Institute of Art)



It was almost inevitable that Boucher should choose *La Musique* as a subject, for much of his time was spent among musicians. His close friend Carle van Loo married into a family of Italian musicians, and van Loo's wife, a talented singer, might well have been the inspiration for the charming vocalist holding the open score. The cellist at the left of this concert *champêtre* may also have formed part of the musical *entourage* chez van Loo, for he too, has been well observed and was probably sketched from life. A drawing exists for the lady reclining, seen from the back (Figure 57), but she,

like her elegant companion and the amorous couple at their right, is merely a staffage figure in this woodland setting.

No drawings have come to light as yet for the other tapestries in the *Fêtes Italiennes* series: the *Chasseur*, *Filles aux Raisins*, *Jardinier*, *Pêcheuse*, and *Danse*, but there is every reason to believe that Boucher followed the same method of building up the designs by means of preparatory studies, or else by utilizing already existing drawings appropriate to the general scheme.

It would be interesting to know just what determined

FIGURE 55

The Violinist by François Boucher. Black, red, and white chalk. Städelches Kunstinstitut



FIGURE 56

The Flute Player by François Boucher. Red chalk. Private collection, Paris





FIGURE 57

Young Woman Reclining on the Ground by François Boucher. Black chalk heightened with white. Private collection, Paris

the choice of themes for the various series that were woven. Were they prescribed by the director of the Beauvais factory, or commissioned by a patron or proposed by the artist? Did the taste for Dutch genre painting which, as we have noted, prevailed in France during the eighteenth century, affect the choice of subject matter? Or was the taste for far lands and things foreign responsible for the various fêtes and jeux with an Italian, Russian, Chinese, or generally Oriental background? (The Queen Esther series by de Troy and Deshayes and the Russian series by LePrince come to mind.) These, however, are questions best left to the historian of taste in the eighteenth century.

The Beauvais tapestry works were at their most prosperous during the twenty-year period Boucher devoted to making designs for their looms. Like most French

artists in the eighteenth century he had to take into account the *grande peinture* of Italy and the genre painting of the North. It is the synthesis of these two currents that lends distinction to his first important commission, the *Fêtes Italiennes*. Perhaps it was the exuberance with which he tackled the challenge of making these designs that helped to revitalize the rather mediocre productions of the Beauvais works at this time. When he turned from genre scenes to designing other series—the Story of Psyche, the Loves of the Gods, the Fragments d'Opéra—for the Beauvais looms, he was able to give his rococo visions the same full play that had animated the *Fêtes Italiennes*. Boucher could thus satisfy the constant demand for these lavish hangings, which to this day remain one of the glories of the weaver's art.