Primary Maker: Anne-Marguéríte-Joséphíne-Henriëtte Rouillé de Marigny, Baroness Hyde de Neuville

Title: View of the Loire from the Factory in La Charité-sur-Loire

Date: 1805

Medium: Watercolor, black and brown ink, graphite, and metallic pigment with touches of gouache on paper extended on two sides, laid on composite sheets of paper

Dimensions: Sheet (irregular): 7 1/2 × 10 3/16 in. (19.1 × 25.9 cm)

Credit Line: Purchase, PECO Foundation Fund for Drawings

Object Number: 2018.21.1

Classification: DRAWINGS

Curatorial Remarks:
Henriëtte’s first extant watercolor and landscape, dating from Revolutionary France, records the couple’s departure down the Loire River, fleeing for their lives. Most likely the baroness had a portable painter’s box with ready-to-use hard cakes of watercolor, developed by William Reeves of London in 1781, which the baron may have purchased during a trip to London. La Charité-sur-Loire was the birthplace of her husband and close to their estate of L’Estang. The factory depicted in this bird’s-eye view was probably the one owned by Henriëtte’s father-in-law. By this time, the town was industrial, and English developers hoped to make it the “Birmingham of France.” About the Artist Born in Sancerre, France into an aristocratic family, Henriëtte, as she preferred to be called, received an education that probably included drawing lessons. At the fall of the Bastille in 1789, she and her father fled Paris for their country house, Château de L’Estang, where she began her artistic self-education. In 1794, during the height of the French Revolution, she married the handsome and hot-headed Jean Guillaume Hyde de Neuville, an ardent
royalist who became involved in conspiracies to reinstate the Bourbon monarchy. In 1800, the couple was imprisoned and forced into hiding under aliases because of his role in the “English Conspiracy.” The baron was also condemned as an outlaw for his alleged participation in a plot to assassinate Napoleon. Fearing for her husband’s safety, the independent baroness attempted to disprove the charges. In 1805, she took her cause directly to Napoleon in a dramatic odyssey across Germany and Austria in pursuit of the French army, finally obtaining an audience with him in Vienna. Impressed with her courage, the Emperor allowed the couple to go into exile. They arrived in New York in 1807, where they stayed for seven years. During their second residency (1816–22), when her husband served as French Minister Plenipotentiary and was made a baron, they lived primarily in Washington, DC, where Henriette became an influential presence and celebrated hostess. After her return to France, the baroness seems to have retired her pen and watercolors. John Quincy Adams described her in his diary as “a woman of excellent temper, amiable disposition . . . profuse charity, yet judicious economy and sound discretion.” Neuville’s watercolor, which is one of the artist’s first known works in the medium, depicts a view in the small town of La Charité-sur-Loire near Sancerre, which was the birthplace of her husband Jean Guillaume. It is the location where the Hyde de Neuvilles began their odyssey of exile down the Loire River, after leaving their nearby country estate, L’Estang. The work also marks the beginning of the baroness’s quest to obtain an audience with Napoleon. The factory depicted in this bird’s-eye view was probably the one owned by Henriette’s father-in-law. By this time, the town was industrial, and English developers hoped to make it the “Birmingham of France.”

Physical Description:
The watercolor depicts a birds-eye view of the Loire River landscape from a factory in the small town of La Charité-sur-Loire near Sancerre, France.

Inscribed: Inscribed along right edge vertically in brown ink: "La Manufacture de la charité. d'où nous Sommes Partis en avril. 1805."

Related Objects: