

18,000 *livres* for the du Barry commission, while Jean Marie Vien, the artist who painted the replacements, was paid 16,000; he plausibly suggests that Fragonard's commission was higher because he painted overdoors to go with the four main panels. He does not exclude the possibility that one of the overdoors, *Love the Avenger*, was repainted in Grasse. On the dating of the overdoors, see also Massengale 1993, 44.

References

- 1960 Wildenstein: 271–272, nos. 321–322, fig. 144, pl. 63.
1972 Wildenstein and Mandel: 339, 345.
1975 NGA: 134, repro.
1985 NGA: 160, repro.
1987–1988 Cuzin: 308–309, nos. 256–257, repro.
1989 Rosenberg: 102, nos. 284–285, repro.

34

1947.2.1

Love as Folly

c. 1773/1776

oil on canvas, oval, 55.9 × 46.4 (22 × 18¼)

In memory of Kate Seney Simpson

Distinguishing Marks and Labels

On stretcher: “No. 9981 / PICTURE” and “No. 34358 / PICTURE”; in blue pencil, “CA1877”

Technical Notes: The paintings were executed on medium-weight, plain-weave fabric. Both paintings are oval-shaped, and though they have been lined and the original tacking margins have been removed, cusping indicates that they retain their original dimensions. The ground consists of three layers: a moderately thick white layer, a thin red layer, and a thin gray layer. Large particles, possibly sand or coarse pigments, were mixed into the ground to produce a subtle surface texture. The paint was applied in multiple opaque and glazed layers. Glazes were used to create the flowers and to delineate stems in the bushes. In *Love the Sentinel*, there is low impasto in the flowers and brushmarkings in the pale colors of the putto, the foreground, and some of the clouds. There are fewer brushmarkings and no impasto in *Love as Folly*.

The structural condition of the paintings is good, but the visual condition is rather poor. The impastoed brushstrokes have been slightly flattened, and the tops of them are dark with surface grime. There are sigmoid cracks in the sky of *Love as Folly*, and there is a significant amount of inpainting in this area. Both paintings have inpainting along the perimeters; it has discolored significantly, but it is hidden by the frames. The varnish has yellowed significantly, and although it appears to have been thinned, it remains disfiguring, with numerous areas of discolored residues.

Provenance: Possibly Jean François Leroy de Senneville [1715–1784], Paris; possibly (his sale, Chariot and Paillet at Hôtel de Bullion, Paris, April 5–11, 1780, no. 56); possibly purchased by Verrier, possibly Marquis de Véri; possibly (his sale, Paillet, Paris, December 12, 1785, no. 39); possibly purchased by Millin, possibly Folliot, possibly (Folliot sale, Regnault, Paris, April 15, 1793, no. 50). Marquis des Isnards; (Wildenstein & Co., Inc., Paris, New York, and London); probably held jointly with (Ernest Gimpel, New York); sold 1905/1906 to John Woodruff Simpson [1850–1920], New York; by inheritance to his widow, Katherine Seney Simpson [d. 1943], New York; by inheritance to her daughter, Jean W. Simpson [1897–1980], New York.¹

Exhibited: *Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Fragonard, Gimpel and Wildenstein*, New York, 1914, nos. 2, 3.



Cat. 34. Jean Honoré Fragonard, *Love as Folly*

Love the Sentinel

c. 1773/1776

oil on canvas, oval, 55.6 × 46.4 (21⁷/₈ × 18¹/₄)

In memory of Kate Seney Simpson

Inscriptions

At lower center in brown glazed paint: fragonard

Distinguishing Marks and Labels

On stretcher: two labels, “No. 9980 / PICTURE,” inscribed “Mrs. Simpson”; and “No. 34359 / PICTURE.” In blue pencil, “CA1878”

Technical Notes: Same as cat. 34.*Provenance:* Same as cat. 34.*Exhibited:* Same as cat. 34.

These versions of *Love the Sentinel* and *Love as Folly* are essentially the same as the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection examples (cats. 32, 33). The primary differences are in *Love the Sentinel*, where the setting is less defined (the balustrade is missing) and less luxuriant; the second tendril of roses that rises to the left in the Bruce version is replaced by a cloud bank; and no doves appear in the sky. Some minor adjustments were made between the Bruce and Simpson variants of *Love as Folly*, but they are less significant. The surfaces of the Simpson variants are less well preserved, giving the canvases a decidedly drier quality, with little of the sparkling brushwork and luscious impasto that must have originally enlivened them and are still apparent in the Bruce paintings. Georges Wildenstein associated the Simpson pictures with those that appeared in the 1780 sale of Leroy de Senneville, where they were described as among the artist’s “most agreeable works,”² a characterization that would be hard to defend today, their state of preservation notwithstanding.

The fact that the pictures, or works like them, belonged to such an important collector as Leroy de Senneville—who also owned Fragonard’s *Young Girl Reading* (cat. 31)—shows how treasured such “minor” decorative pictures were. Indeed, versions of the two compositions were owned by several of the most prominent collectors of the second half of the eighteenth century, including the marquis de Véri (who commissioned *Le Verrou*, now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris); Ménage de Pressigny (the owner of the famous *Swing* in the Wallace Collection, London); Randon de Boisset; and the prince de Conti, among others.³ The subjects were also engraved at least twice during Fragonard’s lifetime, a further indication of their popularity.

Minor or not, these compositions and their variants typify the kind of quickly painted, small-scale decorative pictures that Fragonard frequently produced during his career. Small oval canvases depicting Cupids or *amorini* are abundant throughout his catalogued oeuvre, but most often in the late 1760s and early 1770s, when the painter was enjoying one of his most lucrative periods.⁴ Sometimes the figures’ attributes or attitudes have suggested allegorical associations, such as the seasons or the times of day.⁵ But it is doubtful that such paintings were intended to carry great iconographic meaning. The titles of the present pair are taken from prints made in 1777 by Jean François Janinet: *L’Amour en folie* and *L’Amour en sentinelle*, which, according to Wildenstein, were based on a pair of gouaches rather than any of the oil paintings.⁶ As with so many of Fragonard’s paintings, but especially *The Progress of Love* cycle with which these pictures are associated (see cats. 32, 33), the subjects allude to the various faces of love—whether it makes one foolish, symbolized by the foolscap lofted by the flying Cupid in *Love as Folly*, or whether it conquers all, as the Cupid showing us an arrow in *Love the Sentinel* seems to imply. Roger Portalis, in his pioneering monograph on Fragonard, was reminded by these works of the kind of erotic-sentimental poems produced later in the century by Evariste Parny (1753–1814): “Seeing a rose on a bush, the butterfly alights there. Is he happy, frivolous lover? Suddenly he flies away to other games.”⁷ As if that were not enough, Fragonard also gives us doves—the birds of Venus—and rosebushes, which with their sweet scent but prickly stems offer, as does love, both pleasure and pain.

RR



Cat. 35. Jean Honoré Fragonard, *Love the Sentinel*

Notes

1. Georges Wildenstein wrote to Fern Rusk Shapley that his father had purchased the paintings from the marquis des Isnards, whose unwritten family tradition was that they had owned the pair since they were painted (letter of June 21, 1948, NGA curatorial files). The “CA” numbers on the stretchers of both paintings, and the corresponding prospectus for the pair (in NGA curatorial files) indicate that they were on consignment with M. Knoedler & Co. at some time during the Simpsons’ ownership.
2. “[D]es plus agréables,” Leroy de Senneville sale, Desmarest, Paris, April 5, 1780, no. 56; quoted in Rosenberg 1989, 127 (Wildenstein 1960, 271).
3. See Rosenberg 1989, 103.
4. Wildenstein 1960, 19.
5. See Cuzin 1987–1988, nos. 249–251; Rosenberg 1989, nos. 157–160.
6. Wildenstein 1960, 271. For the gouaches (Ananoff 1961–1970, 2: nos. 1000, 1001), which belonged to the important collector marchal de Saincy (his sale, Paris, April 29, 1789, and days following, lot 79), see Grasse 1995, 32–33. Of the extant paintings, Janinet’s prints are closest to the Simpson versions, although they do not reproduce them exactly. A print after *Love the Sentinel* was also made by Simon Charles Miger in 1779; all three prints are reproduced in Rosenberg 1989, 102, nos. 284a, 284b, 285a.
7. “Sur buisson / Le papillon / Voit-il la rose, / Il s’y repose. / Est-il heureux / Amant frivole / Soudain il vole / A d’autres jeux” (Portalis 1889, 102, 197–198). The lines are from “Eclogue,” in *Oeuvres choisies de Parny* (Paris, 1826), 306–310. These works also reminded the Goncourts of the poetry of Parny (Goncourt 1880–1884, 2:326).

References

- 1880–1884 Goncourt, 2:326.
1889 Portalis: 62, 102, 270.
1906 Nolhac: 156.
1907 Dayot and Vaillat: possibly 14, no. 108, repro. (*Love as Folly*).
1948 New York: 4.
1956 Réau: 146 (*Love as Folly*).
1960 Wildenstein: 270–271, nos. 319, 320, figs. 142, 143.
1965b NGA: 51.
1968 NGA: 44, repro.
1972 Wildenstein and Mandel: nos. 338, 344.
1975 NGA: 132, repro.
1985 NGA: 158, repro.
1987–1988 Cuzin: 308, nos. 254, 255.
1989 Rosenberg: 102, nos. 286, 287.

36

1960.6.12

The Happy Family

c. 1775

oil on canvas, oval, 53.9 × 65.1 (21¼ × 25⅝)

Timken Collection

Distinguishing Marks and Labels

On stretcher: two NGA labels; label printed with “11517”; label with penciled inscription “63 Fragonard”; double impression of an inked stamp with a “7”

Technical Notes: The painting is secured to an eight-member oval stretcher with inset horizontal and vertical crossbars. The stretcher is probably original to the painting. The primary support is a loosely woven, medium-weight, plain-weave fabric. The painting has been lined, and the original tacking margins remain intact. The support was prepared with a double ground consisting of a red layer beneath a gray layer. The paint film is thin, and much of the foreground is painted in dark brown glazes with thin blocks of opaque white colors pulled over them. Opaque paints were also used in the dark architectural background.

The condition of the painting is generally good. In a past restoration prior to its acquisition, the painting was selectively cleaned. The varnish was left on the dark passages but removed from the lighter areas. A subsequent layer of varnish was applied, and all of the varnish on the painting has darkened and yellowed.

Provenance: Possibly collection of Monsieur Servat, 1777, or possibly (sale of Comtesse du Barry, Radix de Sainte Foy, La Ferté, et al., Paillet at Hôtel d’Aligre, Paris, February 17, 1777, no. 55); purchased by Aubert. Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt [1747–1827]. Poilleux collection, Paris. Eduardo Guinle, Rio de Janeiro. Nicolas Ambatielos, London. William R. Timken [1866–1949], New York, by 1935; by inheritance to his widow, Lillian Guyer Timken [1881–1959], New York.¹

Exhibited: *Exposition de tableaux anciens principalement de l’école française du XVIIe et du XVIIIe siècle*, Galerie Wildenstein, Paris, 1912, no. 16. *French Painting and Sculpture of the XVIII Century*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1935–1936, no. 49. *Twentieth Anniversary Exhibition*, Cleveland Museum of Art, 1936, no. 59. *The Age of Watteau, Chardin, and Fragonard: Masterpieces of French Genre Painting*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; National Gallery of Art, Washington; Altes Museum, Berlin, 2003–2004, no. 79.