

GALERIE LAMY
CHABOLLE



Hercules Chaining Cerberus, after Augustin Pajou

Gilt lead, turquin blue marble, white Carrara marble, imperial
breccia, patinated bronze

France

19th century

87 x 51 cm (34.25 x 20 in.)



A 1774 drawing by William Chambers shows that the Marquis de Voyer owned a fine piece of cabinetry housing a stove-fireplace, its panels adorned with a pair of medallions depicting *Orpheus in the Underworld* and *Hercules Chaining Cerberus*.

Pajou was tasked with creating several portraits for the Hôtel de Voyer d'Argenson, along with architectural sculptures and decorative elements. Given that the artisans who worked on the Hôtel d'Argenson are well-documented and nearly all renowned, the medallions sketched by Chambers are widely attributed to Pajou himself.

The Hôtel de Voyer d'Argenson, also known as the Hôtel de la Chancellerie d'Orléans, stood opposite the Palais Royal on what is now rue de Valois. Acquired in 1702 by Philippe, Duke of Orléans, it was originally just a house owned by the Duke's valet de chambre. A grand mansion, designed by Germain Boffrand, was later built on the site. The property changed hands over time: it passed to Mademoiselle de Séry, briefly the Duke's mistress; then to the Duke of Chartres, Louis d'Orléans, son of the Regent; and finally to Marc-René de Voyer d'Argenson, Marquis de Voyer, who had it revamped between 1760 and 1770 by Charles de Wailly.

This relief, likely created after the work at the Hôtel d'Argenson, echoes the composition and vibrant polychromy of the four bas-reliefs Pajou crafted for the overdoors of the mansion's salon. Those works, inspired by the four elements, feature mythological scenes in gilded plaster on mixtion, set against a deep blue *stucco* background. The "subdued" gilding of the metal in this relief seems to mirror the plaster of Pajou's Pluto, Proserpina, Boreas, and Cybele figures, exquisitely modeled with the glow of "aged gold," while a refined *turquin* blue marble

plaque takes the place of the blue *stucco*. Though the colors used in this relief were fairly typical of the neoclassical era, it stands out with a marble-simulated rock — almost *rocaille* in its whimsy — serving as a striking promontory for Hercules.

LITERATURE

John Harris, 'Sir William Chambers and his Parisian album' in *Architectural History*, Londres, 1963 ; James David Draper et Guilhem Scherf, *Pajou*, Paris, 1997.

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