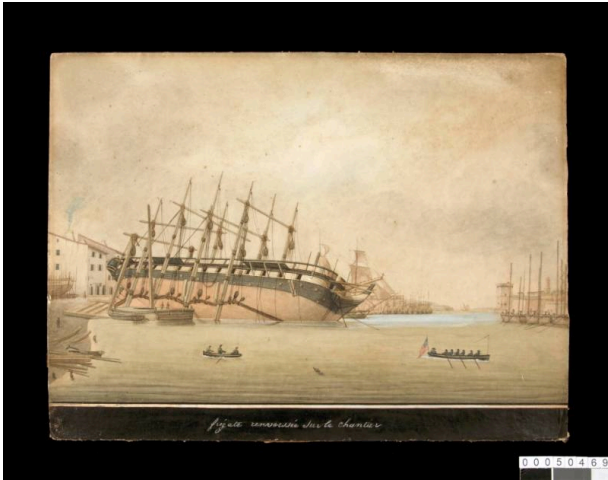


Basic Detail Report



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Title

Fregate reversee sur le chantier

Date

1805-1835

Primary Maker

Ange-Joseph Antoine Roux

Medium

Watercolour on paper, pencil and ink

Dimensions

Overall: 390 x 540 mm

Name

Painting

History

For hundreds of years, hand in hand with the development of maritime industries, ships and shipbuilding, have been the pictorial recording of these maritime endeavours. Painters in oil, cartoonists using pencil and ink and artists using water colour have all attempted to capture scenes of national glory, meritorious victories, the beauty of ships, shipbuilding and the sea and the threat and potential violence of shipwreck, tempests, storms and gales. (Finch, 1983) Sometimes these works were expressions of artistic mastery or artistical whimsies created without a maritime audience in mind but many were commissioned by the ship's builders, its owners, captain or crew who were justifiably proud of their accomplishments and wished to capture and record their achievements. To fulfill this demand for accurate pictorial representation of ships and the sea there emerged in the late 18th and early 19th century the ship portrait painter sometimes called a port painter or 'pierhead artist'. (Finch, 1983) On mainland Europe these artists drew on the skills and techniques developed from the continental tradition of maritime votive painting - which was very popular in Catholic France, Spain, Italy and Portugal from the beginning of the 16th century - when owners, builders and shipping merchants commissioned paintings of their vessel as votive offerings at churches at the beginning or end of a particularly arduous voyage. (Rodriguez, 2005) However as maritime commerce, shipping and trade increased at the turn of the 19th century even those maritime countries, such as North America and Britain, that lacked the Catholic tradition of votive painting also began producing their own pierhead artists. Ship portraits differed in many ways from the more refined and technically accomplished works of the great marine painters such as Turner. Ship portraits were produced for a very different group of individuals, the owners, captains and sailors of a particular vessel, and whilst the pierhead artists' works could be considered technically naïve at times, accuracy to detail

particularly in regards to the ship, its hull and its rigging, was paramount as the audience knew their subject very well and demanded straightforward, accurate depictions of their vessels and would not take kindly to mistakes. This required accuracy for detail probably accounts for why so many accomplished ship portrait painters had a maritime background - John Ward (1798-1849) was the son of a sea captain and had been on several whaling voyages to the Arctic, George Chambers (1803-1857) was an ex-Whitby seaman and the Rouxs of Marseilles were trained cartographers. Distinctions between the northern and southern schools can also be discerned. More expensive painting techniques such as oil paint on canvas tended to be used by the ship portrait artists from north-western Europe while the artists from southern Europe, where competition was more robust and well established, tended to use watercolour, gouache, pen and ink or a combination of all three techniques in order to keep the costs of the work down, making them more affordable and attractive to visiting sailors and mariners. (Finch, 1983) Northern and southern ship portraits also differed in production techniques. Whilst the northern school tended to be produced by individual artists such as Robert Salmon (1775-1844), James Butterworth (1768-1842) and John Ward (1798-1849), the use of watercolour and gouache in southern Europe and later North America encouraged, to a certain degree, the mass production of ship portraits and families of artists, such as the Rouxs of Marseilles (1765-1835) and the Jacobsens (1850-1921) of New York rather than individuals were responsible for thousands of portraits over time. The prolific Roux family produced no less than six practitioners of ship portraiture including Joseph Roux (1725-1793), Ange-Joseph-Antoine Roux (1765-1835); Mathieu Antoine Roux (1799-1872), Ursule-Josephine Roux (1801-?), Francois Joseph Roux (1805-1870) and Francois Geoffroi Roux (1811-1882). Identified with producing over 5,000 ship portraits in the 19th century, the family has been recognised as being among the elite of the genre of traditional ship portraiture. Ange-Joseph-Antoine Roux (1765-1835) was the eldest son of Joseph Roux (1725-1793), a chart agent, hydrographer, ship-chandler and well established ship portrait artist of Marseilles. No doubt Ange-Joseph-Antoine, also known as Antoine Roux, who later inherited his father's business, was brought into his father's practice. He inherited the hydrographer's eye for accuracy and detail. Roux's knowledge of hull shape, ship construction and repair are very apparent - the use of the sheer hulk to careen the vessel, the supporting cable girdle around the hull, the placement of the sheer leg blocks and the positioning of the vessel's anchor cables so that it can be kedged off the slip when required are true to life and historically, technically and accurately portrayed. Whilst the vessel is unidentified the presence of a ship's long boat flying an officer pennant and displaying the flag of the United States of America just off the bow of the vessel leads to some speculation that the heavily built and well armed frigate - with 32 guns on the lower deck and another ten or so on the main deck is possibly one of the US frigates involved in the Tripoli Wars in 1804-1805. Both the USS PRESIDENT and USS CONSTITUTION are known to have entered and been repaired at Marseilles and the New York Public Library has a watercolour painting of the USS PRESIDENT also by Ange-Joseph-Antoine Roux in its collection showing the frigate entering the harbour at Marseilles in 1804 with a very similar ship's boat in the lead. (Toll, 2007) Arguably the most successful of the Rouxs, Ange-Joseph is considered to be superior in quality and historical accuracy to others in his family and he was the inspiration to a following of aspiring French and Italian watercolour painters such as Nicola Camileri (1819-1835). (Archibald, No date) There are examples by all members of the Roux family in museums worldwide, in particular The Peabody Museum of Salem, The Mariners Museum, Newport, The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, Le Musée de la Marine, Paris and Le Musée de la Marine,

Marseilles.