

PORTRAITS OF CHARLES-LOUIS CLÉRISSEAU

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Charles-Louis Clérisseau (1721-1820) the artist, architect and archaeologist had a long and varied architectural and artistic career in Italy, France, England, and Germany which included architectural projects most of which were not executed. He also produces thousands of drawings of ancient Roman ruins, real and imaginary, and decorated several rooms in a pioneering ancient style. Clérisseau worked for such diverse patrons as Catherine the Great of Russia, for whom he designed a Roman House, and Thomas Jefferson with whom he collaborated on the design for the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond. His major archaeological publication is *Antiquities de La France: Premier Partie, Monumens des Nismes* (1771), enlarged edition 1804.¹

Clérisseau, however, is best known for his collaboration with Robert Adam on the study in 1757 of the palace of the Roman emperor

Diocletian at Spalato, present day Split in Croatia. This resulted in Adam's publication, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* in 1764. During my times in Split, first in 1966, and for three months in 1976, my good friend and mentor Duško Kečkemet was a generous host and of invaluable help in my study of Clérisseau and Diocletian's Palace. He has recently published his thorough and long awaited study of Adam and Diocletian's Palace.² Among the fascinating and perceptive discoveries in his suggestion that the figures of an artist at work overlooked by a standing figure in the lower left corner of the frontispiece of the volume engraved by Francesco Bartolozzi (1727-1815) are portraits of Clérisseau and Adam³ [Figure 1]. I do not believe they are actual portraits from life of the two men, but were figures added by Bartolozzi to the scene, a practice he followed in many of the plates for the volume. They may well suggest Clérisseau and Adam, but are not actual portraits of the two men in the 1764 volume.

However, there exist eight portraits of Clérisseau executed during his long life. The earliest of these are two caricatures by Pier Leone Ghezzi (1674-1755) done while Clérisseau was a pensionnaire at the French Academy in Rome. He was there as he had won the Prix de Rome in architecture. The first of these, [Figure 2], identifies the bust length figure as Clérisseau, a French architectural student and an excellent man who posed on December 26, 1751⁴ It is a typical Ghezzi caricature with exaggerated nose and protruding lips which, frankly, resembles any number of caricatures by the artist.

A second, more elaborate, caricature by Ghezzi [Figure 3] dated August 26, 1752 is full length, showing Clérisseau at his drawing board with even more exaggerated features. The inscription reads, "Monsieur Clérisseau, a Frenchman, pensionnaire at the French Academy, De Troy being the director of the same. The aforementioned pensionnaire at the French Academy is a fine architect as such, he came to Camaldoli the Hermitage at Frascati. His Eminence Cardinal Domenico Passionei who ordered a drawing to make a kind of Arcadia to be used as a Follz in the clearing which is in the woods in the aforementioned Hermitage, which he did marvelously well in the presence of his Emi-

nence. Made by me, Cavalier Ghezzi the 26th of August 1752 in my 78th year⁵" Cardinal Passionei's estate housed an important collection of antiques, works of art and was visited by many travelers but there is no mention of this structure, which may not have been executed.⁶

Between 1762 and 1766 Angelika Kauffmann (1741-1807), living in Rome and other parts of Italy, produced a sketchbook of over one hundred drawings, now remounted, of notable friends in Rome. One of these, [Figure 4], is unidentified but I feel sure that it is Clérisseau as it depicts a man with a large nose, protruding lips, and sharp eyes. It is more a straightforward portrait than the Ghezzi caricatures. His hair, or wig, is similar to that of the two Ghezzi portraits. He is shown holding a book and this, coupled with the fact that the drawing is mounted on the same sheet as the portrait of Johann Winckelmann, his good friend. It can be speculated that the drawing of Winckelmann followed that of Clérisseau in the original sketchbook.

It was probably during the late 1760s or the early 1770s that the handsome round portrait drawing was done.⁷ It shows the artist facing left, almost in profile [Figure 5] and closely resembles the portrait by Angelika which is more a three quarter view. The depiction of the lower part of the head is very similar in both drawings although the cheek and jaw in the round portrait is fleshier which would be appropriate in a portrait executed at least eight years later than the Angelika. The piercing eyes in the later work, as well as the similarity of the head and hair in both drawings confirm the identification as depicting the same man. The later one is also inscribed on the bottom of the mat "Charles-Louis Clérisseau Premier Architecte de sa Maj. Imp. de toutes les Russie." This must be a later addition as Catherine did not give that title to Clérisseau until the 1780s. The author of the drawing is not known as the attribution to Anton Graf (1736-1813) was rejected by E. Berkenhagen (*Anton Graf, Leben und Werk*, Berlin 1967, 419, no X13). It may be by a French artist as Clérisseau was in Paris in the late 1760s and 1770s. Elsewhere I have suggested that it might be by the German Johann Fischer (active 1760-1800) who executed a larger version of it in fresco.⁸ This [Figure 6] is larger in size and was executed for the library of the Schloss at Wörlitz.⁹ It is coarser and less subtle in exe-

cution, perhaps due to the change in medium. It is dated about 1772. There is no doubt that the drawing and fresco are related. The Schloss was designed by Friedrich von Erdmannsdorff, 1736-1800, between 1768 and 1773. He had been Clérisseau's pupil in Rome in 1765. It was probably due to him that the fresco subject was chosen and was undoubtedly based on the earlier drawing. Clérisseau, while a trained architect built very little, and throughout his long life made his living by the production of beautiful drawings in bodycolor or watercolor of scenes of ancient architecture, sometimes depicting actual buildings but often imaginary ones or a combination of both. One of the surviving portrait engravings depicts him at work on one of these drawings showing him from the back at his drawing table.¹⁰ [Figure 7]. At one side is a letter, unreadable, and at the other, several books from his vast architectural library which was sold after his death in 1820.¹¹ Inscribed in ink in the bottom margin, "Clérisseau (Louis) peintre et architecte" and "Clérisseau architecte" with his last name inscribed twice in the lower margin. The print probably dates from the 1770s.

More informal is a half length side view of the artist wearing a cap and reading a paper. This may be as late as the 1780s as his flesh has sagged more than in the earlier ones,¹² [Figure 8]. The text beneath it says that the original of the drawing is by J. G. Legrand (1743-1809) who was Clérisseau's son-in-law.

The last known portrait was drawn in 1809 and merely shows his head in profile and part of his shoulders.¹³ [Figure 9]. It has a long inscription describing Clérisseau which was written by his pupil Masson (1743-1829) an engineer. His head is fleshier and he is no longer depicted at any activity. He is 88 years old. There are no dated drawings by Clérisseau after the early 1790s. The second edition of his book on Nîmes, in collaboration with J. G. Legrand, appeared in 1804.

While Clérisseau is best known for his association with a variety of artists and patrons throughout Europe and America, as well as for his vast number of drawings of antiquities and his two books on Ancient Nîmes, the examination of the surviving portraits of him, often with inscriptions, dating from 1751 to 1809, add another facet to our knowledge of this fascinating man.

NOTES

1. For a survey of Clérissseau's entire career see Thomas J. McCormick, *Charles-Louis Clérissseau and the Genesis of Neoclassicism* (New York and Cambridge, 1990).
2. Duško Kečkemet: *Robert Adam. Dioklecijanova Palača i klasicizam*, Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske, Zagreb, 2003.
3. Kečkemet, p. 63.
4. Rome, Gabinetto della Stampe, Farnesina, Vol. 2602, n. 286, "Caricature of Clérissseau", pen and ink, 4 5/8 X 3 1/8 in. (11.6 X 7.9 cm.), inscribed: "Mons, Cleriso dilectante di Architettura faancese, huomo benestant assai fatto da me Cav. Ghezzi 26 Xbre 1751." This is from an album of 128 pages containing 306 drawings, See F. Hermanin, "Un volume di disegni di Pier Leon Ghezzi, *Bolletino d'Arte*. I, no. 2, Feb. 1907. 17-24; and M. Benesovich, "Ghezzi and the French Artists in Rome", *Apollo*, L. May 1967, 340-47.
5. London, British Museum, 1859-8-6-269, pen and brown ink, probably over black lead, 19 11/16 X 7 3/4 in. (53 X 19.6 cm.) Mondieur Clérissseau Francese uno dei Monsionary nell'Acad, di Francia e sendo directores nella Med. Mondieur di Truè il Med.° Mensionario e bravissimo achitetto, il quale allo Camandolsi.."Eremo a Frascati dell Emⁱⁿ. il Card^{al}. Domenico Passionei, il quale gli ordino un Disegno..fare una specie di Arcadia, ad uso di Ticchio Nello Spiarro che a nella Suo Macchia in d°. Romitorio, il quale lo fece a Meraviglia bene, in presenza d. d.° Emⁱⁿ. fatto da Me Cav.' Ghezzi il di 26 [16?] Agosto 1751 [2] Nella Mia eta di Anni-78-." The two dots occur in the original text and are not ellipses. I am indebted to the late Mr. Edward Croft-Murray, Keeper of Prints and Drawings, for allowing me to study this drawing.
6. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 47, "Unidentified Man", "black chalk, 7 9/16x5 1/4 in. (19.2 x 13.2 cm.). The entire sketchbook has been published by Peter Walch, "An early Neoclassical Sketchbook by Angelika Kauffman", *Burlington Magazine*, CXIX, no. 887, February 1977, 98-111. Walch now agrees that it may represent Clérissseau.
7. Collection; T. J. and M. D. McCormick, black crayon, 8 1/4 inches (21 cm) in diameter, Inscribed below on mat, "Charles-Louis Clérissseau Premier Architect de sa Maj. Imp. de Toutes les Russie." The numbers 5633 and 87, probably indicating a Russian Collection identification, also appear in the lower right corner.
8. McCormick, *Clérissseau*, frontispiece and p. 232.
9. The Schloss at Wörlitz, 16 11/16" X 12 9/16 in. (42.5 X 32 cm.), inscribed "Clérissseau [see *Staatliche Schlosser and Garten. Wörlitz, Oranienbaum, Luisium, Charles-Louis Clérissseau 1722-1820 Ruinen Malerei* (Wörlitz, 1984), text by Burkhard Gabler, pl. 16.
10. Paris, Lucien Dorbon, 9 3/8 X 16 15/16 in. (18.7 X 23.8 cm.).

11. *Catalogue des Livres, Tableaux, Dessins d'Architecture, et autres... du Cabinet de Feu M. Ch. Louis Clérisseau*, 11-16, 1820, Paris l'Hotel de Bullion.
12. Paris, Musée Carnavalet, Album Destailleur, black crayon, 6 9/16X5 ¼ in (16.6-X13.3 cm.), inscribed below: "Du Genie des anciens Serère observateur Ils sut les reproduire en ses savants ouvrages Et se heureux talents d'accord avec son coeur Font revivre la Grèce et la vertu des sages: Nota: Ces vers, comme l'original de ce dessin son de l'architect Légrand son gendre."
13. Paris, Musée Carnavalet, Album Destailleur, "Side View of Head", black crayon, 4 3/8X3 3/16 in. (11X8 cm.), inscribed below: "Ce portrait de M. Clérissey architecte a été dessiné d'après nature en 1809 Il est parfaitement ressemblant quoique fait par surprise, c'est à dire pendant que cet artiste regardoit less des-seins dons son cabinet. C'est a M. Matary, architecte, alors mon dessinateur qe je le dois.

Le Masson

Ingenieur"

PORTRETI CHARLES-LOUIS CLÉRISSEAU-A

Sažetak

Clérisseau (1721-1820), umjetnik i arheolog, imao je dugu i raznoliku karijeru koja obuhvaća izradu mnogih crteža rimskih iskopina, stvarnih i onih imaginarnih. Radio je diljem Europe, uključujući između ostalog izradu dizajna za Katarinu Veliku u Rusiji i Thomasa Jeffersona za glavni grad države Virginije.

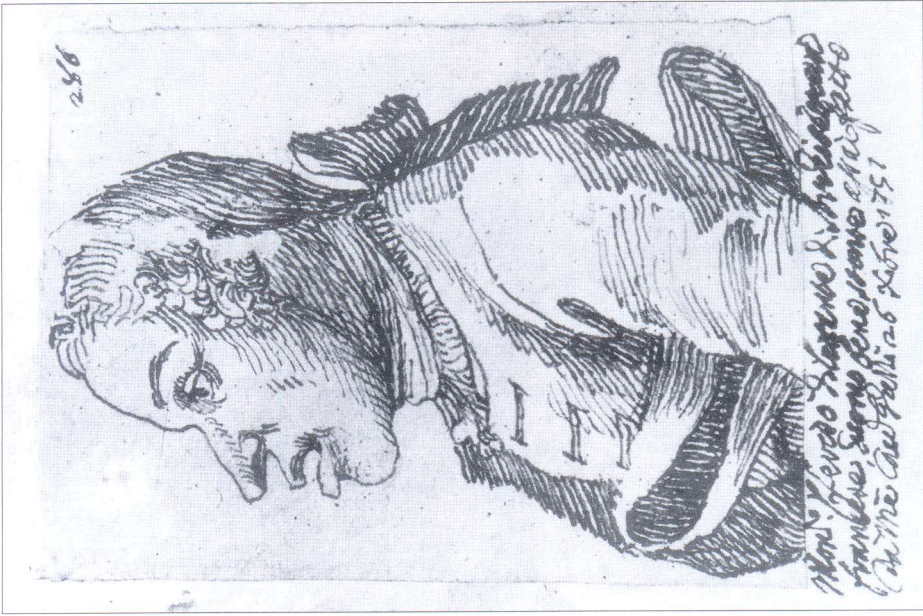
Clérisseau-ova najvažnija arheološka publikacija je na temu rimskih spomenika u Nimes-u, 1757. godine. Ipak, najbolje ga poznajemo po njegovoj suradnji sa Robertom Adamom u proučavanju Dioklecijanove palače u Splitu, koja je bila temelj Adamovog izdanja 1764. godine. Duško Kečkemet pretpostavlja da detalji iz uvoda knjige predstavljaju portrete Clérisseau-a i Adama, ali ja ne mislim da su oni stvarni portreti. Oni predstavljaju naime, osam Clérisseau-ovih postojećih portreta, urađenih između 1751-1809. godine, uključujući dvije karikature koje je načinio Pier Leon Ghezzi 1751. i 1752., crtež Angelike Kauffmann 1762-1766. i portret nepoznatog francuskog umjetnika izrađenog kasne 1760. ili rane 1770. koji je korišten kao osnova za portret fresku u biblioteci u Wörlitz-u, oko 1772. godine. Imamo također dva Clérisseau-va rada 1770. i 1780. i zadnji crtež iz 1809. Mnogi od ovih su posvećeni i dolaze sa dugim posvetama.



Pier Leone Ghezzi "Caricature of Clérisseau" 1753



French 18th century "Charles-Louis Clérisseau" late 1760's - early 1770's



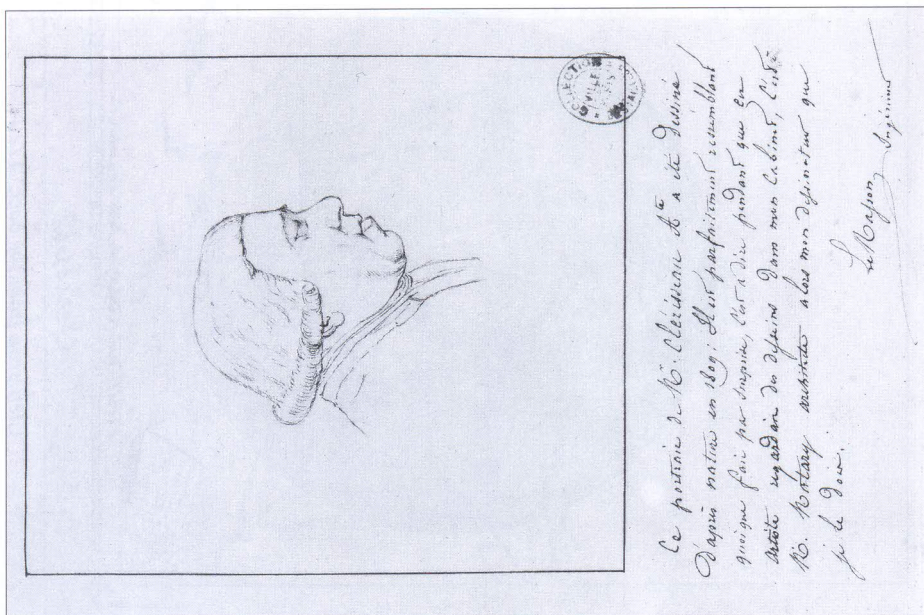
Pier Leone Ghezzi "Caricature of Clérisseau" 1751



"Clérisseau from the back" 1770's



Johann Fischer "Clérisseau" c. 1772



Matary, "Clérisseau side view of head" 1809