

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Plum Branches Intertwined

Pierre-Joseph Redouté (French, 1759–1840)

Date 1802–04

Medium Watercolor on vellum

Dimensions 12 9/16 x 10 3/8 in. (31.9 x 26.4 cm)

Credit Line Bequest of Charles A. Ryskamp, 2010

Exhibitions Highlights of Drawings from The Frick Collection

Accession Number 2010.3.01

Currently On View

First Floor, Room 6, Cabinet

Commentary Redouté devoted his life to botanical painting, largely thanks to the patronage of Joséphine Bonaparte, first wife of Napoleon, whose gardens at Malmaison, outside Paris, provided inspiration for many of his work. In his youth, he traveled through Flanders and the Netherlands, encountering works by artists such as Rachel Ruysch and Jan van Huysum, known especially for their paintings of elaborate floral arrangements. Redouté's early works capture single flowers and buds with meticulous detail. In addition to his thousands of floral illustrations, Redouté also painted fruit, placing it in bowls for still lifes or in bunches, as in this harmonious arrangement of yellow and blue plums. Works of this kind were usually destined for art collectors. In delicate washes of blue, green, and gold, the artist portrays the fruit's subtle gradations of tone and evokes the powdery coating on the skins. Using a visual trope typical of Dutch and Flemish prototypes, Redouté adds droplets of water to the golden plum at the forefront, suggesting its freshness. , Redouté's lyrical arrangement of plum branches may have been preparatory for an illustrated volume on Empress Josephine's gardens at Malmaison, although this sheet was never engraved for publication. In delicate washes of blue, green, and gold, the artist portrays the fruits' subtle gradations of tone and conjures the powdery "bloom" coating their skins. Using a visual trope beloved by Dutch and Flemish still-life painters, he adds droplets of water to the golden plum at the forefront, implying its fresh retrieval from the garden.