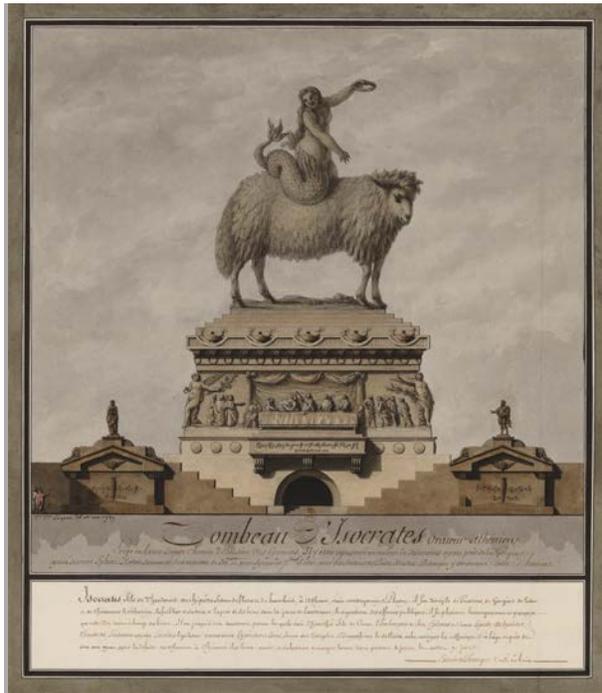


THE MENIL COLLECTION PRESENTS *JEAN-JACQUES LEQUEU: VISIONARY ARCHITECT, DRAWINGS FROM THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE*

Exhibition includes 50 architectural drawings and anatomical studies

Lequeu first exhibited in Houston with support of Menil Foundation in 1967



HOUSTON, TEXAS, July 18, 2019 – The Menil Collection is pleased to present *Jean-Jacques Lequeu: Visionary Architect, Drawings from the Bibliothèque nationale de France*, an exhibition of fifty drawings by the draftsman and architect who is now considered to be one of the most inventive artists of post-revolutionary France. On display at the Menil Drawing Institute from October 4, 2019 to January 5, 2020, the exhibition explores Lequeu’s wildly imaginative and spectacularly detailed architectural drawings and anatomical studies.

Jean-Jacques Lequeu (1757–1826) was born in Rouen, France, and studied architecture in Paris. Over the course of his career, which was drastically impacted by the French Revolution of 1789 and its aftermath, he worked as a draftsman, a

surveyor, and a cartographer. His posthumous acclaim would come from the discovery of the hundreds of carefully preserved drawings he bequeathed to the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 1825, the year before his death.

Ranging from government proposals to fantastic and speculative structures that were never intended to be constructed, Lequeu’s architectural drawings depict civic infrastructure along with curious oddities such as a towering stable in the shape of a cow. His designs were never realized in part because of the political turmoil caused by the Revolution, and also because some of his architectural ideas, though minutely executed on paper, were simply impossible to build.

Said Edouard Kopp, John R. Eckel Jr. Foundation Chief Curator, Menil Drawing Institute, “*Jean-Jacques Lequeu: Visionary Architect* presents rarely-seen drawings of great refinement by a singular artist, who was in essence an ‘architect on paper’. Together, the drawings attest to Lequeu’s prolific imagination, erudite knowledge and eclectic tastes. They also demonstrate how brilliantly he managed to bring his ideas to life on paper. More broadly, they remind us of the tremendous power and versatility of the drawing medium to conceive and to visualize architecture.”

Lequeu's work was included in an exhibition of 18th century French architectural drawings titled *Visionary Architects, Boullée, Ledoux, Lequeu* organized by Jean Adhémar for the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 1964. Dominique de Menil, co-founder of the Menil Foundation, brought that exhibition to the United States in 1967 and arranged its American tour. *Visionary Architects* was shown at the University of St. Thomas, Houston, before travelling to the St. Louis City Art Museum; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum of San Francisco; The Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania; and the French Embassy in Mexico. Along the way it influenced a number of young artists. Sol LeWitt and Claes Oldenburg, for example, are known to have closely studied the fanciful and obsessive peculiarities of Lequeu's work. In 1968 the notable architecture critic of *The New York Times*, Ada Louise Huxtable, described Lequeu's drawings as "délices [that] hover between dream and nightmare.... His is a world much closer to Disneyland, but infinitely more elegant and erotic...." Sixteen of Lequeu's drawings that were included in *Visionary Architects* will be shown at the Menil as part of the forthcoming presentation.

Said Menil Director Rebecca Rabinow, "John and Dominique de Menil took great satisfaction in introducing the public to art of all kinds. Mrs. de Menil believed that Lequeu was someone who 'belong[ed] to another world, a world pervaded by dreams and eccentricities'. Now, in the context of our new Menil Drawing Institute building, we can return to this quietly influential exhibition from more than fifty years ago and provide an in-depth look at an artist who is now being rediscovered by scholars."

Co-organized by the Petit Palais, Paris, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the exhibition in Houston is curated by Edouard Kopp, John R. Eckel Jr. Foundation Chief Curator, and Kelly Montana, Assistant Curator, both of the Menil Drawing Institute. Following the Menil's presentation, the exhibition will travel to the Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

Major funding for this exhibition in Houston is provided by Cecily E. Horton and The Vaughn Foundation. Additional support comes from Curtis & Windham Architects; Caroline Huber; Janie C. Lee; Adelaide de Menil; Susanne and William E. Pritchard III; Bill Stewart; and The City of Houston

Evening Preview for the Public

Members of the public are invited to attend a preview reception for the exhibition on Thursday, October 3 at 7 p.m. at the Menil Drawing Institute located at 1412 West Main Street in Houston.

About the Menil Collection

Houston philanthropists and art patrons John and Dominique de Menil established the Menil Foundation in 1954 to foster greater public understanding and appreciation of art, architecture, culture, religion, and philosophy. In 1987, the Menil Collection's main building opened to the public. Today, some thirty years later, the Menil Collection consists of a group of five art buildings and greenspaces located within a residential neighborhood. The Menil embodies the ideals and values of its founders, in particular, that art is vital to human life and should be readily accessible to all persons.

A program of the Menil Collection since 2008, the Menil Drawing Institute has organized major traveling exhibitions and undertaken scholarly projects including the catalogue raisonné of the drawings of Jasper Johns. The Menil Drawing Institute's home, designed by the Los Angeles-based firm of Johnston Marklee with the collaboration of landscape architects Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, opened this past November.

All Menil art spaces are open Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Admission to the Menil is always free.

On view at the Menil

Roni Horn: When I Breathe, I Draw, Part II – On view through September 1, 2019

Contemporary Focus: Mineko Grimmer – On view through September 1, 2019

The Graphic Work of Dorothea Tanning – On view through October 13, 2019

Mapa Wiya (Your Map's Not Needed) – Opening September 13, 2019

Allora & Calzadilla: Specters of Noon – Opening May 15, 2020

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Image

Jean-Jacques Lequeu, *The Tomb of Isocrates, Athenian Orator (Tombeau d'Isocrate, orateur athénien)*, 1789. Ink on paper, 18 1/2 × 16 1/8 in. (46.9 × 40.9 cm). Collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France, dépt. des Estampes et de la photographie

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