

Two drawings by Charles Eisen for the Louvre

23/4/08 — **Acquisitions — Paris, Musée du Louvre** — The Département des Arts Graphiques has recently acquired two drawings by Charles Eisen representing *Saint Eloi* (ill. 1 and 2) from the Artesepia Gallery in Paris.

Although this artist is mostly known for his work as a draughtsman, he was also a painter who the Goncourt brothers considered as having been unfairly ignored: "These paintings in which Eisen placed a part of his pride and minor glory, what has become of them? Who knows about them? Who has seen them, who can determine their value?" [1]. Some of these canvases have nonetheless resurfaced since the Goncourts wrote these words, mostly amorous subjects in mythology or genre scenes. Eisen is also the author of some rare religious paintings including the *Saint Eloi Preaching* which was in the Church of the Saint-Esprit in Paris, destroyed in 1803, and which today has disappeared but is known thanks to an etching by the artist.



1. Charles Eisen (1720-1778)
Saint Eloi Preaching, 1740
Pen and brown ink, wash and watercolour
-
14.5 x 9 cm
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Photo: Galerie Artesepia



2. Charles Eisen (1720-1778)
Saint Eloi Reading
Pen and brown ink, grey and brown
wash -
16.3 x 9,6 cm
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Photo: Galerie Artesepia

One of the two sheets acquired by the Louvre (ill. 1), signed and dated at the bottom *C. Eisen inv. et fecit. St. Eloy praichant 1740*, is a preparation for this composition. The second, representing the same bishop saint reading (ill. 2), of a comparable size, is perhaps a project for its pair. Is this a preliminary study for a painting or an engraving which today is lost? There is no *Saint Eloi Reading* listed among the artist's works.

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[1] « Ces tableaux sur lesquels Eisen plaçait une partie de son orgueil et de sa petite gloire, que sont-ils devenus ? Qui les connaît ? Qui les a vus, qui peut en dire la valeur ? » Quoted by Claire Lemoine-Isabeau, "Les peintures de Charles Eisen", *Gazette des Beaux-arts*, October 1961, p. 223-236