French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945

The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Editor





The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art I French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945

Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse*, 1784

Artist Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, French, 1755–1842

Title Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse

Object Date 1784

Alternate and M. de la Comtesse de Grammont [sic] Caderousse; Portrait of Marie-Gabrielle de

Variant Titles *Gramont, Duchesse de Caderousse*

Medium Oil on oak panel

Dimensions (Unframed)

41 3/8 x 29 7/8 in. (105.1 x 75.9 cm)

Signature Signed and dated lower right: L.se LeBrun.f.1784

Inscription Inscribed verso, lower center: Marie Gabrielle de Sinety / Marquise de

Gramont / Duchesse de Caderousse

Credit Line The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust

through exchange of the bequest of Helen F. Spencer and the generosity of Mrs. George C. Reuland through the W. J. Brace Charitable Trust, Mrs. Herbert O. Peet, Mary Barton Stripp Kemper and Rufus Crosby Kemper Jr., in memory of Mary Jane Barton Stripp and Enid Jackson Kemper, and Mrs. Rex.

L. Diveley, 86-20

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Catalogue Entry

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Who is this shepherdess with so delicate a complexion With a roguish eye, a childlike mouth?...

It is you, young Gramont; even with this disguise
You have not lost the features of an Angel...

—Chevalier D.p.D.J (André Chénier 1762–1794)

Marie Gabrielle de Sinety (1761–1832), the twenty-threeyear-old comtesse de Caderousse whose beguiling portrait by Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun inspired the lines above, was born in Paris on March 9, 1761, most likely in her parents' apartment in the Palais-Royal.² She was baptized in the nearby church of Saint-Roch. Her father, André Louis Marie, marquis de Sinety (1712–1773), had been in the retinue of noblemen surrounding Louis, duc d'Orleans (1703–1752). Marie Gabrielle's mother, Marie Anne de Ravenal (ca. 1730–1797), descended from a line of financiers and civil servants whose great wealth enabled them to marry her to a member of the hereditary aristocracy, and this union placed her at the top of France's social pyramid. Thus, Marie Gabrielle had family ties to the painters, art patrons, and financiers belonging to the powerful de Boullongne³ and Richard clans.



Fig. 1. French School, *Portrait of André Joseph Hippolyte, marquis de Gramont Vachères, comte de Gramont Caderousse and later duc de Caderousse* (1761–1817), ca. 1778, oil on canvas, 25 5/8 \times 21 5/8 in. (65 \times 55 cm), private collection

On February 1, 1779, the eighteen-year-old Mademoiselle de Sinety wed another Provençal nobleman, André Joseph Hippolyte, marquis de Gramont-Vachère and comte de Caderousse (1761–1817; Fig. 1).⁴ He had joined the royal army, where, prior to the French Revolution, he served as a musketeer, a *chevau-léger* in the king's light cavalry, and later as captain and colonel in the regiment of the Cuirassiers du roi.⁵ Marie

Gabrielle and André Joseph Hippolyte's marriage contract was signed at Versailles on January 31, 1779, by members of the royal family. 6 On July 25 of the same year, the new marguise de Gramont-Vachères and comtesse de Caderousse was formally presented at Versailles, where she would join the coterie of young women of the noblesse de cour (court nobility) surrounding Marie Antoinette, Queen consort of Louis XVI.⁷ The newlyweds resided in Paris, at the old Château de Caderousse on the rue de Condé, and in the Hôtel d'Ancezune in Avignon.⁸ They had four children: Robert (died in infancy), Eulalie (1780-1802), Amélie Marie Louise (1781–1840), and Emmanuel Marie Pierre Félix Isidore (1783–1841). Although the revolutionary years proved difficult for both of them due to their associations with the court, they survived, and Marie Gabrielle became duchesse de Caderousse in 1800.9 Her husband, from whom she obtained a financial separation, died in 1817 at the Château de Caderousse. Marie Gabrielle passed away in the same château at the age of seventy-one on April 24, 1832, and the house of Gramont Caderousse became extinct in 1865 with the death of her eccentric and spendthrift grandson, the 9th duke.10

Although we do not know who commissioned this portrait of the comtesse de Caderousse, it is likely that the sitter or a family member asked Vigée Le Brun to paint her likeness in 1784, one year after Vigée Le Brun received full membership in the French Académie royale as a *peintre du roi* (painter to the king, or court painter).¹¹ According to the list of Vigée Le Brun's sitters for the year 1784, she painted nine portraits, including that of the comtesse de Caderousse.¹²



Fig. 2. Peter Paul Rubens, *Portrait of Susanna Lunden(?) (Le Chapeau de Paille)*, probably 1622–1625, oil on oak, $31\,1/8\times21\,1/2$ in. (79 x 54.6 cm), The National Gallery, London, Inventory number NG852

Vigée Le Brun represented the beautiful brown-eyed and dark-haired woman as a *vendangeuse*, or grape harvester, in keeping with Marie Antoinette's love of contrived rusticity in the hamlet built for her on the grounds of the Palace of Versailles. ¹³ Vigée Le Brun's work had precedents in the Arcadian portraiture of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish art, including Peter Paul Rubens's (1577–1640) *Chapeau de Paille* (Fig. 2), probably featuring Rubens's sister-in-law, Susanna Lunden, in a red-and-black costume popular in the Spanish-ruled Netherlands. Vigée Le Brun admired the portrait in 1782 while visiting the Low Countries. ¹⁴ Indeed, Rubens's fancy red-and-black dress and widebrimmed hat find similar form in the Nelson-Atkins portrait. ¹⁵

Vigée Le Brun portrayed Madame de Caderousse in a pastoral version of what was then known as "Spanish dress," so-called for its black-and-red color scheme, and its stylings that the English called "Van Dyke dress" after the seventeenth-century Flemish painter Anthony van

Dyck (1599-1641). Madame de Caderousse wears a tightly corseted black velvet bodice with sleeves attached to each other with scarlet-red satin ribbons at the shoulder in bows that nearly match her skirt. 16 To protect her fair skin from the sun, Marie Gabrielle wears a wide-brimmed straw hat under which is a voluminous kerchief of sheer muslin that falls to her bosom in the manner of a fichu. Vigée Le Brun emphasizes the most sensual qualities of her young subject's beauty. A captivating, open-lipped smile partially reveals the comtesse de Caderousse's teeth, an innovation that other portraitists, such as Jean Antoine Houdon (1741-1828) and Jacques Louis David (1748-1825)—and Parisian artists in general by the mid-eighteenth century —began to explore. Before then, people posed closelipped not only out of a sense of decorum but also to mask their bad teeth. However, by the 1760s, a new culture of sensibility had emerged that privileged displays of emotion as markers of an individual's humanity and an awareness of how others perceived them. Indeed, to smile a truthful, natural smile, whether in person or as represented in a portrait, signaled that you were a person of taste and, above all, of feeling. 17 Like her alluring smile, the comtesse's gaze was meant to make her appear more engaging to the viewers she so directly confronts.

The radiant freshness of Madame de Gramont's complexion is the result of a masterful application of thin, colored glazes over warm base tones, which creates the effect of blood running beneath the skin. We can see similar effects in Vigée Le Brun's *Self Portrait with a Straw Hat* (Fig. 3). The flesh tones in the Nelson-Atkins portrait contrast with the dark brown curls encircling her face. This coiffure was a departure from the powdered hair typically worn by women of the court and the privileged classes, and it caused quite a stir when Madame de Gramont attended a theatrical performance after one of the posing sessions. Vigée Le Brun, who loved improvising costumes for her sitters, recalled:

I could not stand the use of powder. I persuaded the beautiful Duchess de Grammont-Cadrousse [sic] not to put any on her hair when sitting for her portrait. Her hair was as black as ebony, and I divided it up into irregular curls on her forehead. The sitting ended at dinnertime; and when it was over, the duchess went to the theater without rearranging her hair. Such a beautiful woman was sure to set the fashion—the style caught on slowly, and then was widely followed. 18



Fig. 3. Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat, 1782, oil on wood, 37 3/8 x 27 1/8 in. (95 x 68.5 cm), Collection of Baronne Nadine de Rothschild, Château de Pregny, Switzerland

Similarly, when the Salon opened its doors on August 25, 1785, the critical reception of the Nelson-Atkins picture was almost unanimously positive. Most writers who commented on it stressed the seductiveness, the very physicality of the image, and its subtle erotic charge. For example, Barthélemy François Joseph Mouffle d'Angerville, the author of the accounts of the Salon published in the *Mémoires secrets*, suggested that the model was actually on the lookout for an amorous adventure. Another critic, the abbé Soulavie, praised the artist's uncanny ability to render the finely nuanced facial expressions of her models. Yet another, in both verse and prose, commented on the freshness of her complexion, capable of attracting the wandering eyes of young men visiting the crowded Salon. 21

Indeed, the painting has not lost anything to change, and it is in a nearly perfect state of preservation.²² The wooden support upon which Vigée Le Brun painted is made up of five vertically joined planks of oak and has never been cradled. It was prepared with coats of light

priming that imparts a certain brilliance to the overall effect, leaving critics today singing similar praises.

Joseph Baillio January 2011

Notes

- 1. D. P. D. J. [André Chénier], "Sur le Portrait de Mme la Comtesse de Gramont Caderousse, peinte en Vendangeuse au Salon, par Mme Le Brun," *Journal de Paris*, no. 239 (August 27, 1785): 987. The historian Gaston Deschamps identified the author by name. See Gaston Deschamps, "Les Portraits de M. de Calonne," *La Revue de Paris* 2 (March 15, 1926): 384.
- 2. The letter "e" in the comtesse de Caderousse's maiden name, Sinety, is sometimes incorrectly written with an acute accent, as "Sinéty." Period sources, including the Salon of 1785, cite the sitter as the comtesse de Gramont Caderousse. This is the present author's preference. However, many other period sources cite the sitter as Marie de Gramont, Comtesse Caderousse. See, for example, Histoire et Généalogie de la Maison de Gramont (Paris: Schlesinger Frères, 1874), 6, "C'est à tort . . . que l'on désigne quelquefois le Duc de Caderousse sous le nom de Duc de Gramont-Caderousse, car il n'y a pas de Duché de ce nom en France, mais bien seulement le Duché de Caderousse."
- 3. The most extensive study of the Boullongne family remains comte Amédée de Caix de Saint-Aymour, Une famille d'artistes et de financiers au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: Les Boullongne (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1919).
- 4. Among Gramont-Vachères's other nobiliary titles were marquis de Codolet, comte de Sézanne, baron du Thor and Velorgues, and seigneur de Montelard, Vaugelas, Pelourson, Chapeau Cornu, Vignière, Areisse, Vasselin, Coyrol, Frigoulets and Cabrière, and Governor of the town of Crest and its medieval tower.
- 5. In a heretofore unpublished bust-length portrait of him (see Fig. 1), which must have been painted shortly before his marriage, he wears the elegant uniform of the king's military household guard and the small enamel cross of the order of Malta, of which he was a member until his marriage.

 Marielle Legros, of the Association française des

- Membres de l'Ordre Souverain de Malte in Paris, informed the author (in an email dated November 6, 2008) that André Joseph Hippolyte de Gramont-Vachères was made a knight of Malta when he was only two years old.
- The contract was drawn up on January 31, 1779, by the notary Jean Baptiste Dupré; a first draft of it is preserved in the Minutier Central des Archives nationales de France, Paris, inv. no. Étude XCIII, doc. 506.
- 7. Prominent among the women of the queen's immediate entourage were the princesse de Lamballe, the duchesse de Polignac, the duchesse de Guiche and the comtesse de Polastron, all of whom had their portraits painted by Vigée Le Brun.
- 8. Their residence in Paris may have been the seventeenth-century Hôtel de Gramont Caderousse, at 24 rue de Condé; or the Sinetys' apartment in the Palais-Royal. The village of Caderousse, which is now in the department of the Vaucluse, is near the Rhône river, southwest of the town of Orange. Only insignificant vestiges of the château exist today.
- 9. The inscription on the verso of the painting, "Marie Gabrielle de Sinety / Marquise de Gramont / Duchesse de Caderousse," must have been added after the painting was made in 1784 and after the sitter became a duchess in 1800. It may have been added when the painting changed hands.
- 10. Further genealogical research by the author is available in the NAMA curatorial files.
- 11. Using a pointed instrument, the artist scratched her signature and the date "1784" on the ledge at the lower right. The portrait was copied or pastiched a number of times. Five miniature copies of it are known, some of which were undoubtedly made as mementos for family or friends. For a comprehensive list, see "Copies" in the menu below. In 1786, the miniaturist Antoine Vestier (1740–1824) recycled the pose and the basket of grapes in his portrait of Madame Hamon des Roches de Bournay, née Agathe Françoise de Lorne. See Anne-Marie Passez, Antoine Vestier, 1740–1824 (Paris: Fondation Wildenstein, 1989), cat. no. 52.

- 12. The nine in her list are: "1 M. le comte de Vaudreuil / 5 Copies du même / 1 La comtesse de Grammont-Caderousse / 1 Madame la comtesse de Serre / 1 M. de Beaujon." See Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Souvenirs de Madame Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, de l'Académie Royale de Paris, de Rouen, de Saint-Luc de Rome et d'Arcadie, de Parme et de Bologne, de Saint-Pétersbourg, de Berlin, de Genève et Avignon (Paris: H[enri] Fournier, 1835), 1:332. The portrait of the comte de Vaudreuil is now in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, 49.11.21; the portrait of the comtesse de Serre is in the Toledo Museum of Art, 1966.33. The current location of the portrait of M. de Beaujon is unknown, but a pastel study of it is in a private collection; see Joseph Baillio, "Quelques peintures réattribuées à Vigée Le Brun," Gazette des beaux-arts 99 (January 1982): 13–26; and Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of Pastellists* Before 1800 (London: Unicorn Press, 2006).
- 13. Vigée Le Brun employed the pastoral theme repeatedly prior to the revolution, as, for example, in her portraits of Louis XVI's youngest sister, Élisabeth of France (1764–1794), known as Madame Élisabeth (the finest known version of this portrait, but certainly not the original painted in 1782, is the unsigned painting today in the Musée national du château de Versailles, inv. no. MV 8143), and the marguise de La Guiche, (private collection, France; reproduced in Pierre de Nolhac, Madame Vigée-Le Brun: Peintre de la Reine Marie Antoinette, 1755–1842 (Paris: Goupil, 1908), facing p. 142), a work shown at the Salon of 1783. In 1786, she created a portrait of the marquise de Puységur similarly attired and holding a water jug (Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, 1951.004.015).
- 14. Vigée Le Brun saw the Rubens portrait of his sister-in-law, Susanna Lunden, in 1782 in the van Havre collection in Antwerp while touring the Low Countries with her husband, the dealer Jean-Baptiste Pierre Le Brun. See *The Memoirs of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun*, trans. Siân Evans (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 24. This transformative event caused her to refine her technique to an exceptional degree. For more on the dress found in the Rubens portrait and its inspiration of Arcadian costume in French portraits, see Aileen Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France, 1750–1820* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 165.

- 15. The color contrast of intense black and bright red is one Vigée Le Brun used later in her career, notably in her *Portrait of Madame Perregaux* (1789) in the Wallace Collection, London, and in her *Portrait of Gräfin Maria Theresia Czernin* (1793) in Castletown House, Ireland.
- 16. Tired of fashions emulating ancient styles of Greek and Roman dress, French artistic patron Madame Geoffrin (1699–1777) encouraged artists to look for another European style that achieved a similar link to the past. Spain represented a faraway exotic land where styles of dress from the seventeenth century found form in current dress. Pierre Beaumarchais's plays, including *The Barber of Seville* (1775) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (1784) continued to popularize these styles in the 1780s. See Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress*, 163–65.
- 17. See Colin Jones, *The Smile Revolution in Eighteenth Century Paris* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 18. "Je ne pouvais souffrir la poudre. J'obtins de la belle duchesse de Grammont-Cadrousse [sic] qu'elle n'en mettrait pas pour se faire peindre; ses cheveux était d'un noir d'ébène; je les séparai sur le front, arrangés en boucles irréguliers. Après une séance, qui finissait à l'heure du dîner, la duchesse ne dérangeait rien à sa coiffure et allait ainsi au spectacle; une aussi jolie femme devait donner le ton. Cette mode prit doucement, puis devint enfin général." Vigée Le Brun, Souvenirs, 1:53.

The historian Pierre de Nolhac recounts the story somewhat differently: "The beautiful Duchess of Gramont-Caderousse went to dinner at the home of the duke de Laval without powdering her hair and dressed as a Provençal peasant girl; and since it was such a success, the queen brought her to the [Petit] Trianon one afternoon to see her in her costume." ["La belle duchesse de Gramont-Caderousse a paru à souper chez le duc de Laval, coiffée sans poudre et costume en paysanne provençale; comme elle y a eu grand succès, la Reine l'a fait venir à Trianon, un après-midi, pour lui voir porter son costume."] See Pierre de Nolhac, *Marie-Antoinette* (Paris: Plon, 1936), 185.

19. [d'Angerville], "Seconde Lettre [Sur les peintures, sculptures et gravures exposées au Salon du Louvre le 25 août 1785]," *Mémoires Secrets* (London: John Adamson, 1786), 30:183–86. The

- *Mémoires secrets* were an anonymous chronicle of events in France that occurred between 1762 and 1787.
- 20. [Jean Louis Giraud-Soulavie], *Réflexions Impartiales* sur les Progrès de l'Art en France, et sur les Tableaux Exposés au Louvre, par ordre du Roi, en 1785 (London, 1785), 31.
- 21. *Impromptu sur le Sallon des Tableaux Exposés au Louvre en 1785: Dialogue en vers* (London: Cailleau, [1785?]), 9.
- 22. A copy of a treatment report drafted by the New York conservator Frank Zuccari for the art dealers Clyde Newhouse and Guy Stair-Sainty on May 3, 1985, is preserved in the NAMA curatorial files, as is a condition report made for the museum in 1986 by Forrest R. Bailey. See also the technical entry by Diana M. Jaskierny.

Technical Entry

Citation

Chicago:

Diana M. Jaskierny, "Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse, 1784," technical entry in ed. Aimee Marcereau DeGalan French Paintings, 1600–1945: The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2021), https://doi.org/10.37764/78973.5.334.2088.

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Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse was completed on panel, approximately 1.25 centimeters in thickness, with edges that bevel to 0.6 centimeters in thickness. The panel is composed of four boards, joined by tongue and groove. Two knots are present on the panel boards: one in the sitter's hair near her proper left temple and another in the right-side background. With one knot in a central board and thus in the center of the composition, it is possible that this

selection of wood originally had another intended use, or that the inherent vice of knots in wood was not of great concern to the panel maker or Vigée Le Brun.¹ Although it is believed that Vigée Le Brun's preference for panel paintings stems from her travels to Flanders and Holland in 1781, based on this and other panel paintings by Vigée Le Brun, it is possible she did not have access to superior panel makers known in other European countries.² On the panel reverse, there is an inscription in black paint naming the sitter.³



Fig. 4. Raking light, *Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse* (1784)

The ground layer is off-white in color, extending to the edges of the picture plane, and was applied smoothly and thinly, allowing for the wood grain to be visible when the painting is viewed in raking light (Fig. 4). In a few instances it extends onto the panel edges, indicating that the panel has retained its original dimensions. Exposed ground and paint ridges are present on all four edges, revealing that the panel edges were covered while the painting was being completed.⁴ The ground is also visible in the thinly painted areas of veil-covered

hair, amplifying the translucent effect of the sheer veil (Fig. 5).⁵



Fig. 5. Detail of veil, illustrating the thin paint application that reveals the ground layer, *Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse* (1784)

The portrait was formed from a wide variety of paint applications, from strokes little more than washes, to heavy impasto. The background was created with thin, fluid blue and gray paint, allowing for luminosity, while the fabrics were built with thicker paint and finished with glazes, conveying a sense of heavyweight fabric. Within the face, the skin is blended and softened with rapid zigzags and swirls (Fig. 6). In her memoirs, Vigée Le Brun dedicated a chapter to her painting technique and her recommendations to other artists, focusing on the portrait sitters, and many of these techniques are represented in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art painting. As the face is rendered, she recommends that cavities such as ears, nostrils, and eye sockets be darkened with red tones, while highlights, such as in the eye, should have a warm golden tone, and fair skin have

a visible vein in the temple.⁶ Indeed, all these technical attributes are found on the Nelson-Atkins painting (Fig. 7). With the paint still wet, Vigée Le Brun incised her signature on the lower right with a finely pointed tool, perhaps a needle (Fig. 8).⁷



Fig. 6. Detail of face in raking light, displaying textured brushstrokes, Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse (1784)



Fig. 7. Detail of face, Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse (1784)



Fig. 8. Detail of incised signature, Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse (1784)



Fig. 9. Detail of pentimento in skirt, *Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse* (1784)

Pentimenti are frequently found in works by Vigée Le Brun, and this painting is no exception.⁸ Possibly the most visible to the naked eye is the reshaping of the skirt, which has been cropped by approximately 1.5 centimeters, covered by blue paint of the sky (Fig. 9). This pentimento is revealed through drying cracks and has become more visible as the paint has aged. The bows on the shoulder exhibit another artist change, indicating that they were cropped and reshaped. Because of its thick application of paint, this pentimento is especially visible when viewed in raking light (Fig. 10). Other pentimenti include the left brim of the hat being extended slightly and the bottom edge of the basket being raised by approximately 2 centimeters. When examined in infrared reflectography (IRR), even more pentimenti are illuminated, further illustrating how Vigée Le Brun adjusted her composition as she worked. Many of these changes are found within the hands and arms. The shape of the black sleeve has been widened and squared, the forearm appears to have been widened, and both hands have been refined (Fig. 11). Beneath the left hand, a warm brown color is visible in drying cracks, indicating the hand and basket handle were raised (Fig. 12).



Fig. 10. Raking light detail of pentimento in bows, *Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse* (1784). The original top of the red bow is visible by the texture in raking light (blue arrow), while the bottom of the bow has become more visible as the white overlaying paint has aged and become translucent (green arrow).



Fig. 11. Digital photographs in normal viewing light (left) and reflected (right), illustrating artist changes in the hands and arms, *Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont. Comtesse de Caderousse* (1784)



Fig. 12. Photomicrograph of proper left fingers and brown paint visible in drying cracks, *Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse* (1784)

The painting is in good condition. The panel joints are stable, with only hairline fractures in the paint and ground layers. There are two curved cracks in the ground and paint layers: one to the left of the sitter's head, relating to a knot in the center left panel board; and one in the shoulder, relating to the same board's curved grain. Minimal retouching is present, mostly found along the outer edges and where the panel boards join. Throughout the painting there are regions of delaminating varnish, possibly related to Rembrandt Retouching Varnish, applied in 1985.9

Diana M. Jaskierny December 2020

Notes

 Wood panels with knots tend to be more prone to movement due to humidity, making these areas susceptible to cracks and paint loss. If this panel was made specifically for a Court painting, it implies that the panel maker, Vigée Le Brun, or both may have been unaware of or unconcerned about the severity of damage the central board knot could cause to the paint layer. Alternatively, one could argue that this may have been a premanufactured board, possibly originally intended for furniture, and this was the only supply available to Vigée Le Brun at the time of the painting. As with the Nelson-Atkins painting, Mme *Perregaux* (1789; The Wallace Collection, London) was found to have a side board of good quality and a central board of lesser quality. Jo Hedley, "Vigée Le Brun's Newly Conserved Portrait of Mme Perregaux in the Wallace Collection," Burlington Magazine 146 (April 2004): 228.

- Hedley, "Vigée Le Brun's Newly Conserved Portrait of Mme Perregaux in the Wallace Collection," 228.
 See also Humphrey Wine, The Eighteenth Century French Paintings (London: National Gallery Company, 2018), 536.
- Written in script, the inscription reads, "Marie Gabrielle de Sinety / Marquise de Gramont / Duchesse de Caderousse".
- 4. This exposed ground is approximately 5–6 millimeters around all four edges; however, retouching does cover some of these areas to prevent its visibility when the painting is framed. This border was also found on the Wallace Collection's *Mme Perregaux* (1789). Hedley, "Vigée Le Brun's Newly Conserved Portrait of Mme Perregaux in the Wallace Collection," 230.
- 5. This technique is reminiscent of that of Rubens, an artist Vigée Le Brun idolized. Unlike his canvas paintings which often have dark grounds, Rubens used light grounds on panel paintings to "give luminosity to thinly-glazed areas of the picture." Joyce Plesters, "'Samson and Delilah': Rubens and the Art and Craft of Painting on Panel," *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 7 (1983): 36.
- The Memoirs of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, trans. Siân Evans (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 356–57.
- A similar incised signature is present on *Portrait of Mrs. Chinnery* (1803; Sidney and Lois Eskenazi
 Museum of Art, Indiana University, Bloomington,
 IN). Julie Ribits, paintings conservator, personal
 communication, August 31, 2020.

- 8. For more examples of pentimenti found in Vigée Le Brun paintings, see Wine, *The Eighteenth Century French Paintings*, 523, 536.
- 9. Rembrandt Retouching Varnish is composed of Laropal K80, a ketone resin. This type of varnish is known to autoxidize rapidly and become brittle with age, leading to cracking and a hazy appearance. Mary Schafer, April 22, 2011, technical examination report, Nelson-Atkins conservation file, no. 86-20. See also René de la Rie and Alexander Shedrinsky, "The Chemistry of Ketone Resins and the Synthesis of a Derivative with Increased Stability and Flexibility," *Studies in Conservation* 34 (1989): 9–19.

Documentation

Citation

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MLA:

Boyle, Brigid M. "Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Comtesse de Caderousse, 1784," documentation. French Paintings, 1600–1945: The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, edited by Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2021. doi: 10.37764/78973.5.334.4033

Provenance

Probably commissioned from the artist by Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, comtesse de Caderousse (née de Sinety, 1761–1832), and/or her husband, André Joseph Hippolyte de Gramont-Vachères, comte de Caderousse (1761–1817), Château de Caderousse, Caderousse, France, 1784–April 24, 1832 [1];

Probably inherited by her brother, André Louis Marie de Sinety, 2nd marquis de Lurcy-Lévis (1758–1832), Lurcy-Lévis and Paris, France, 1832 [2];

Probably by descent to his son, André Louis Marie Théogène, 3rd marquis de Sinety (1788–1846), France, 1832–November 8, 1846 [3];

Probably inherited by his brother, André Louis Woldemar Alphée, 4th marquis de Sinety (1791–1868), Château de Misy, Misy-sur-Yonne, France, 1846–January 13, 1868;

By descent to his son, Alexandre-André-Marie-Elzéar, 5th marquis de Sinety (1820–1905), Château de Misy, Misysur-Yonne, France, 1868–April 15, 1905;

By descent to his son, Armande-Marie-Albert, 6th marquis de Sinety (1852–1923), Château de Misy, Misysur-Yonne, France, 1905–November 29 or 30, 1923;

By descent to his son, Henry-André-Marie-Anatole, 7th marquis de Sinety (1887–1980), Château de Misy, Misysur-Yonne, France, 1923–ca. 1979;

By descent to his son, André-Cœur-Marie-Gérard, 8th marquis de Sinety (1924–2013), Château de Misy, Misysur-Yonne, France, ca. 1979–1984 [4];

Sold by the latter at *Importants Tableaux Anciens et Modernes*, Nouveau Drouot, Paris, November 28, 1984, lot 21, as *La Duchesse de Gramont-Caderousse en vendangeuse*, and purchased by Newhouse Galleries and Stair Sainty Matthiesen on joint account, New York, 1984–1986:

Purchased from Newhouse Galleries and Stair Sainty Matthiesen by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, 1986.

Notes

[1] The name Gramont is sometimes spelled with a second m, as it appears in the Salon catalogue. However, genealogical research supports the spelling we have adopted; see letter from Joseph Baillio to Roger Ward, August 25, 1986, NAMA curatorial files. The name Sinety appears both with and without an accent sign over the e in the literature. Since the sitter's birth certificate omits any accents, we have done so as well. Also the sitter's first name is sometimes hyphenated, but again, since the birth certificate omits accents, we have done so as well; see documentation in NAMA curatorial files. Although Marie Gabrielle is often described as a duchess in the literature, she did not attain this title until the death of her father-in-law, Marie Philippe Guillaume de Gramont-Vachères, in 1800. The portrait's title and provenance thus reflect the sitter's social status at the time of commissioning.

[2] The earliest documentation of this portrait's provenance within the Sinety family dates to 1895, at which time it belonged to the 5th marquis de Sinety. However, genealogical research strongly suggests that the painting passed to André Louis Marie de Sinety, Marie-Gabrielle's brother, at the time of her death. As he passed away on October 18, 1832, he only owned the painting for six months.

[3] André Louis Marie Théogène de Sinety never married and had no children. Documentation received from Newhouse Galleries and Stair-Sainty Matthiesen at the time of purchase indicated that he resided at the Château de Misy. However, it was his younger brother, André Louis Woldemar Alphée, who married the sole heir to this château, Alexandrine Marie Joséphine de Brion, in 1819. See Maurice Pignard-Péguet, Seine-et-Marne: Histoire Générale Illustrée des Départements depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours (Orléans: Auguste Gout et Cie, 1911), 384–85.

[4] Documentation received from Newhouse Galleries and Stair-Sainty Matthiesen at the time of purchase indicated that the painting had passed to the 9th marquis de Sinety before being sold at auction. However, it was the 8th marquis who put it up for sale after being contacted by a scholar seeking to publish the portrait as a comparative figure in an exhibition catalogue. See letter from Joseph Baillio to Brigid M. Boyle, July 22, 2014, NAMA curatorial files.

Copies

Jean-Baptiste Jacques Augustin (1759–1832), untitled drawing, ca. 1785–1790, pen and ink, sepia, heightened with white, on paper, 3 3/16 in. (8.2 cm) diam., location unknown, illustrated in *European Silver, Miniatures and Objects of Vertu* (Geneva: Christie's, 1987), 79.

Attributed to Augustin Dubourg (1758–1800), *A Lady*, 1786, ivory miniature, 3 in. (7.6 cm) diam., private collection, illustrated in *Centuries of Style: Silver, European Ceramics, Portrait Miniatures and Gold Boxes* (Christie's: London, 2014), 6, 81.

Jean-Baptiste Jacques Augustin (1759–1832), *Marie-Gabrielle de Sinety, duchesse de Gramont-Caderousse*, 1790–1791, watercolor and gouache ivory miniature, mounted on a gold-rimmed tortoiseshell snuff box, 2 13/16 in. (7.2 cm) diam., Musée Condé, Chantilly.

Jean-Baptiste Jacques Augustin (1759–1832; former. attr. Michel-Jean-Maximilien Villers, active 1788–1804, died ca. 1836), *Portrait of a Lady*, 1795, ivory miniature, 3 1/8 in

(8.0 cm) diam., sold at *The Pohl-Ströher Collection of Portrait Miniatures Part II* (London: Sotheby's, July 4, 2019), no. 92, p. 60.

Huvert, ivory miniature, framed dims. 9 1/16 x 7 7/8 in (23 x 20 cm), location unknown, illustrated in *Art Russe* (Paris: Olivier Coutau-Bégarie, 2008), 85.

Unknown artist, after Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, probably late 18th century, watercolor and gouache ivory miniature, private collection, Paris, cited in Nicole Garnier-Pelle et al., Portraits des maisons royales et impériales de France et d'Europe: Les miniatures du musée Condé à Chantilly (Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 2007), 234.

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French 18th-Century Painting, Newhouse Galleries, New York, closed October 14, 1985, unnumbered.

A Bountiful Decade: Selected Acquisitions 1977–1987, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, October 14–December 6, 1987, no. 66, as Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Duchesse de Caderousse.

Vigée Lebrun: Woman Artist in Revolutionary France, Grand Palais, Paris, September 23, 2015–January 11, 2016; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, February 15–May 15, 2016; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, June 10–September 11, 2016, no. 29, as The Comtesse de Gramont Caderousse Gathering Grapes (New York and Ottawa only).

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