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J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM PRESENTS FLIGHT OF FANCY: THE GALLE CHANDELIER

This new installation of one of the Getty's Museum's most beloved works of art allows visitors to see it in a new light



Flight of Fancy: The Galle Chandelier

At the Getty Center, Los Angeles
April 9, 2019 through April 19, 2020

Los Angeles – The extraordinary Galle Chandelier, 1818-1819, has long stood out as a highlight of the J. Paul Getty Museum's decorative arts collection. *Flight of Fancy: The Galle Chandelier* is a special, year-long display of the chandelier that allows visitors to see one of the Getty's most beloved objects in a new light.

Resembling a hot-air balloon, the chandelier is a work of extreme novelty that includes a glass bowl intended to hold water and small goldfish and eighteen candles whose flames

would illuminate a room after dark. It was made by a French bronze caster and gilder Gérard Jean Galle (1788-1846) in 1818-1819. While the balloon-like form is entirely modern for the era, various aspects of the design evoke the ancient concept of the four elements: plant motifs (earth), candle flames (fire), the bowl (water), and flying griffins (air).



A close up of the symbol for Aries, the ram

Acquired by J. Paul Getty in 1973, the Chandelier has been on permanent display at the Getty Center since it opened in 1997. After being de-installed early this year for conservation, photography, and study, the new exhibition encourages close viewing of the chandelier and explores the inspiration, sources, and themes of its imaginative design. The chandelier is displayed at eye-level, allowing visitors to examine its rich detail more closely. Also on view are prints from the collection of the Getty Research Institute that illustrate sources of inspiration for the artist. Didactic panels and close-up photographs illustrate the chandelier's details. An accompanying interactive video will allow visitors to see what the chandelier would look like lit.

Gérard Jean Galle described how the continuous movement of fish in the water would amuse the viewer. This idea reflected a design theory of the early 1800s that suggested



The candle holders are adorned with rooster heads

objects should be not only functional but also gratifying to the eye and the imagination. Representing the heavens, the blue globe at the center of the chandelier has gilt stars and is encircled by a gilt-bronze band bearing the twelve symbols of the zodiac.

Gérard Jean Galle (French, 1788–1846) was a bronze caster and gilder who designed and made luxury items in gilt bronze such as clock cases, candelabra, chandeliers, and vases. He exhibited a number of pieces at the Paris Exhibition of French

Products of Industry in 1819. He then wrote to the government of King Louis XVIII, offering the works for sale and providing detailed descriptions of each. These included a chandelier of the same design as that at the Getty:

Fish chandelier: In the middle of a blue enameled globe scattered with stars is a circle with the signs of the zodiac and six griffins carrying candles ... [below is a glass bowl fitted with] a plug intended for the removal of the water which one places in the bowl with small goldfish whose continuous movement will give agreeable recreation to the eye.

Galle was not successful in his appeal to sell the chandelier to Louis XVIII and struggled financially throughout his career. Nevertheless, he continued producing high-quality objects in gilt bronze and was awarded a gold medal at the Paris Exhibition of 1823.

Flight of Fancy was curated by Jeffrey Weaver, associate curator for sculpture and decorative arts at the Getty Museum.

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The J. Paul Getty Museum collects Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts to 1900, as well as photographs from around the world to the present day. The Museum's mission is to display and interpret its collections, and present important loan exhibitions and publications for the enjoyment and education of visitors locally and internationally. This is supported by an active program of research, conservation, and public programs that seek to deepen our knowledge of and connection to works of art.

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