Gerald W. Cloud
Rare Books • Manuscripts • Archives
410 Hauser Blvd, #10J, Los Angeles, CA 90036

An elegant watercolor album of historical costumes, an academic study

[FASHION]. DEBOUNY (Hélène). *HISTOIRE DE LA MODE.* [Manuscript].

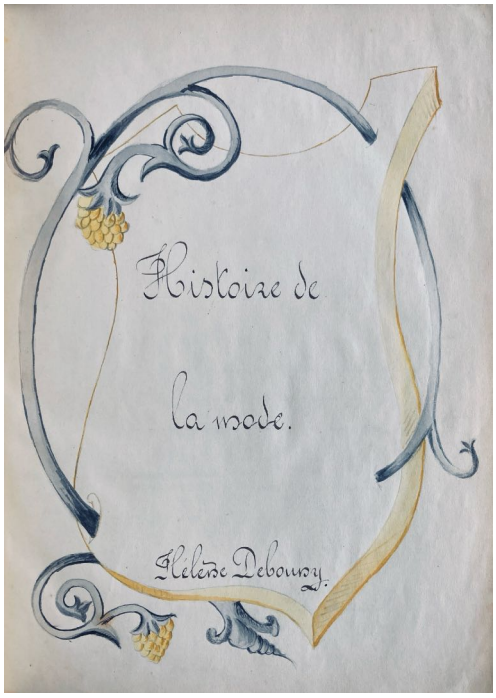
S.l., s.d. [October 1913 - July 1914].

(35.5 x 25.5 cm). Modern boards with grey canvas spine and corners.

Title page in a watercolor frame, and 38 leaves (numbered in pencil), including 37 full-page pencil and watercolor drawings showing costumes, protected by guard sheets. 39 leaves total.

A splendid folio manuscript album, ostensibly an academic study by Hélène Debouny, bringing together, in chronological order from ancient Greece to the Third Republic, watercolor dress illustrations (exclusively women's fashion), with explanatory text on matters both historical and sartorial.

$4,500



Below: a typical page opening, this one for "1547-1558, Henri II et Catherine de Médicis." The album includes textual descriptions, indicating the different aspects of the fashion of the period. In this case, the individual elements of the dress are described: the corsage (bodice), the manche (sleeve), the fraise (ruff), the jupe (skirt), the ceinture (belt), giving the historical context as part of the description.

Nearly all the plates have the date they were drawn, starting October 3, 1913, and the album, by way of its systematic manner of presentation, strongly suggests that it is a work achieved as part of a formal program or academic assignment. This hypothesis is especially reinforced by the presence of pencil notations that seem to be grades (e.g. "8.8 / 10") and on a certain number of sheets, of the annotation "Vu [seen]". Unfortunately, we have not been able to discover more details regarding the identity of Hélène Debouny who signs the manuscript.

From the period of Louis XVI.

Like similar pedagogical examples for mathematics or geography, the album's first plate presents a definition of its subject. The history of fashion is thus:

"*On appelle mode, un usage particulier qui règle la forme des vêtements, de la parure des meubles, etc. L'historique de la mode ne peut comprendre les périodes bien déterminées de l'histoire générale. Les fluctuations qu'elles subit sont souvent dues à des causes toute superficielles et les modifications y apportées pendant ces dernières siècles ont été excessivement nombreuses; la mode prendre le plus souvent le nom du règne qui l'a vue naitre et sous lequel elle a été en honneur.*"*

*One defines fashion as a particular custom that determines the shape of clothing, the adornment of furniture, etc. The history of fashion does not comply with the well-defined periods of general history. The fluctuations fashions undergo are often due to very superficial causes, and the modifications made to them during the last few centuries have been exceedingly numerous; fashion most often takes the name of the reign in which it was born and under which it was honored.

Above: (left) costumes from ancient Greece, and (right) ancient Rome.

Above: fashion from the 16th century under the reigns of François I and Henri III.

Above: (left) a formal gown from the 1860s ; and (mid. and right) contemporary styles from Summer 1914.

Below: a dress from the period of Louis XIV (1643-1715).

Louis XIV 1643. 1715.

Marie Thérèse d'Autriche Mme de Maintenon

1° Étoffes magnifiques sur brochée d'or et d'argent.
2° Étoffe toile peinte
3° Bouton de jais et d'émail
4° Ruban moiré
5° Abondance de pierreries et de bijoux (recherche du luxe)

Jupe - | a. La jupe de dessous est en satin moiré ou glacé brodée d'argent
b. Robe de dessus garnie de broderie d'or. – traîne.

Corsage. | Le corsage s'arrête aux hanches, prend bien la taille et se termine en pointe, collerette de dentelle couvrant le haut du corsage.

Manche. | Les manches sont bouffantes et courtes avec manches de dessous en dentelle bordée de fleurs de ruban et ne couvrant que la moitié du bras.

La vogue des transparents date de 1676. C'était des brocarts d'or et d'azur au dessus desquelles on portait des robes en dentelles soie, en points d'Angleterre ou en chenille veloutée.