

## Romantic Interiors

### *Watercolours 1820 – 1890*

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum,  
New York - Donation *Eugene V. Thaw*  
10 September 2012 – 13 January 2013

Julius Eduard Wilhelm Hellft (German 1818 1894)  
The Music Room of Fanny Hensel, 1849  
© Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, New York, Smithsonian Institution - Thaw Collection



The Musée de la Vie Romantique is joining with Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York for a presentation of Cooper-Hewitt's remarkable collection of some eighty-nine 19th-century European Interiors. The works were donated to Cooper Hewitt by Eugene V. Thaw, from his own collection.

The remarkable quality and astonishing richness of this group of watercolours and gouaches on paper invites the viewer into the privacy of the most patrician dwellings of the time. Tastes that were changing according to the priorities of different nations and the design styles of the time were a close reflection of the rise of a new class to positions of power and the need, in the wake of the Enlightenment and the French

Revolution, to address major political, economic and social challenges. Throughout Europe – in France, England, Germany and Austria – and in Russia as well, a “cult of the interior” led to the commissioning of individual room portraits which were kept in albums to be shown to guests or given as gifts to married children. Artists, who may have trained as topographical painters or porcelain painters took up the new practice of executing these interiors with great skill.

At court and in town it was the thing to welcome guests into many-roomed apartments that strove to outdo each other with the work of the most fashionable architects and interior decorators, and to commission works suggestive of the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie. Conversation, letter writing, chamber music and intimate painting enlivened the existence of the privileged and the first of the clubs where a cultivated gentry was shaping a new, modern lifestyle.

With its broad panorama of Western decorative art of the 19th century, this exhibition in the two private studios of the Enclos Chaptal will offer the public all the diversity of those multilingual salons where the worlds of finance and power mingled with those of art and literature.

#### Curator

**Daniel Marchesseau**

Director, Musée de la Vie Romantique

#### Gail Davidson

Curator of Drawings, Prints, and Graphic Design  
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, New York  
Guest curator

#### Catalogue

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#### Admission

Adults: 7 €/Concessions: 5 €/age 14-26: 3,50 €

**Entry to the permanent collection is free**

**Open daily, 10 am – 6 pm**

except Mondays and public holidays

#### Guided tour of the exhibition

by the museum's lecturers

**Thursdays at 10:30 am and 2:30 pm**

**Saturdays at 2:30 pm**