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## Raoul M. de Longpré fils, elusive painter of lilacs and roses

James J. White

Apparently Raoul M. de Longpré fils had a successful formula—a bouquet of lilacs and/or roses floating in space or surmounting a plinth, rendered in delicate watercolor with an inchoate background darker on the left side. Who was this painter and why has he been confounded with the better-known Paul de Longpré? While all the pertinent facts may never be known, this brief account may clear some confusion and elicit further information.

The first painting by Raoul that I ever saw (about 1969) was of lilacs, in the collection

of George J. McDonald of Washington, D.C. Some years later I encountered another in a Middleburg, Virginia gallery, and in 1978 I learned that one had been donated to the Hunt Institute. Yet another, of roses—now on display in The Grand Salon at the Renwick Gallery, Washington, D.C.—was acquired by the National Museum of American Art in 1918 as part of a large bequest by A. R. and Mary Houston Eddy. To published queries (*Art & Antiques*, January–February 1982; *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, 19 March 1982) I received



Figure 1. "Lilacs" signed M. de Longpré fils. Private collection.



Figure 2. "Roses" signed Raoul M. de Longpré fils. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution: A. R. and M. H. Eddy donation.



Figure 3. "Still Life: Flowers" signed Raoul M. de Longpré fils. Formerly Newhouse Galleries.



Figure 4. "Roses" signed Raoul M. de Longpré fils. Hunt Institute: Gift of Alfred T. Morris, Jr.

responses from owners of similar works in Rhode Island (eight), New York (two), Florida (painting purchased in Massachusetts), Mississippi (painting previously in a Nebraska household) and North Carolina. Still others have been advertised in recent years by galleries.

The only standard source that refers to Raoul M. de Longpré is Mallett's (1940) *Supplement*, which lists him as "Fr. ac. 19th Cent. in France" and cites "Auction Art Sale Reports. [For data write Mallett Library, Hackensack, N.J.]" Letters to the Bowker Company and subsequently to Peter Smith Publisher, Inc. yielded no information about the Mallett Library. The Library of the National Museum of American Art and the National Portrait Gallery then informed me that, upon Mallett's death in 1944, his card catalogue and 498 scrapbooks containing reproductions of art-

works were donated by his son to the Library of Congress, and that in 1982 these were transferred to the NMAA/NPG Library. Finally tracked down, this resource proved to contain no mention of Raoul M. de Longpré.

The signature of each artist is most distinctive. In all known cases, Raoul's delicate signature appears as "Raoul M. de Longpré fils," "R. M. de Longpré fils," or merely "M. de Longpré fils." The signature is on angle at bottom right when the bouquet is floating; it is horizontal at bottom right when the bouquet is on a plinth. Paul's "Paul de Longpré" (sometimes including city and date) has accentuated serifs and is horizontal at lower left or right. However, once into the search, I was surprised to find references to paintings signed by Raoul but attributed to Paul. In addition, Raoul was believed to be the son of Paul;



Figure 5. "Bouquet of Yellow Roses and Lilacs" signed Raoul M. de Longpré fils. Courtesy Wunderlich & Co., Inc., New York.

however, that would be unlikely with "fils" after the name of the former. A major art dealer in New York City wrote about a painting "which we catalogued as being by Paul De Longpre and which was signed at the lower right: Raoul M de Longpre fils" and another which "again, we catalogued . . . as Paul De Longpre, but it was signed at the lower right: P M De Longpre fils, although the 'P' could have been an error in cataloging." A second dealer wrote that "the attribution of these watercolors in our archives has been changed at some point to Paul de Longpré." Perhaps this paper will encourage comparative stylistic study of artworks by these two, surely different, de Longprés.

Marlor's history of the Brooklyn Art As-

sociation (1970, pp. 170, 260) contains two intriguing references, with perhaps erroneous bracketed information, under Index of Exhibitions:

DE LONGPRE, [Paul] fils, Lyons, Fr. 1855-1911  
Los Angeles, Calif. May '75 #232 Wild Roses and  
Lilac o-W.H. Gibson

LONGPRE (fils), B. [possibly son of Paul De  
Longpre] Dec '73 #265 Lilacs, wc, o-Theo. E.  
Smith; #266 Wild Flowers, wc, o-Theo. E. Smith

Though reportedly Paul was painting flowers on fans at age 12, he was only 20 years old in 1875 and would not come to New York for 15 more years. His first oil was yet to be accepted at the Paris Salon. "Fils" and the subject matter would indicate that these paintings listed by Marlor are instead by Raoul.

Considering the apparent general confusion



Figure 6. "Flowers on a Ledge" signed Paul de Longpré. Private collection.

over the identities and works of the two de Longprés, I decided to pursue Paul, hoping for traces of the more enigmatic Raoul. Both seemed to have been turn-of-the-century émigré painters from France with special fondness for the rose. Paul (formally Marquis Paul Maucherat de Longpré) was born in Lyons in 1855, the son of Victor and Theresia (Pinchaud) de Longpré. His father, two brothers (Paul was one of ten children), an uncle (was this Raoul, who may have encouraged Paul's journey to America?) and other members of the family were also painters. Paul married Josephine Estievenard and had two daughters, Blanche and Pauline (see Moure, 1975 for the only reference that mentions a son also). He came to New York in 1890, where he exhib-

ited flower paintings in 1896. After moving to Los Angeles about 1899, he built—on a prominent corner lot along Hollywood Boulevard—a Moorish house and garden, which Avery (1948) described as "a source of unending wonder and delight to tourists from far and near," to which a "tally-ho service brought thousands of visitors to the now famous artist and his floral haven." Paul died in Hollywood in 1911 and, unfortunately, seems to have left no clues about any relative named Raoul. (White & Co., 1967; Earle, 1975; NMAA/NPG Library file on California artists, compiled by Ferdinand Perret)

Such a competent painter as Raoul must have left more than just a dozen paintings. And surely somewhere there are tracks in im-



Figure 7. "Climbing Roses" signed Paul de Longpré, Los Angeles, 1908. Courtesy Ruth Carter Stevenson.

migration records, city directories and exhibition notices that await the persistent sleuth.

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Figure 8. "Poppies and Bees" signed Paul de Longpré, Los Angeles, 1906. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art: Charles H. Quinn Bequest.

Jean Madigan, Charles L. Magriel, Paul Magriel, Clark S. Marlor, George J. McDonald, Susan E. Menconi, Barbara J. Mitnick, Elizabeth Moore, Nancy D. W. Moure, Mrs. Anthony Olivo, Alexandra West Rollins, Robert D. Schwarz, A. S. Singer, Peter Smith, Frank H. Sommer, Doreen Squilla, Barbara C. Terry, Mildred G. Thaler, Jean-Michel Tuchscherer and Helen Wurdemann.

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