

Fantastically French!

Design and Architecture in 16th- to 18th-Century Prints

2: *Vulcan Forging Cupid's Wings*

This design takes the form of a festoon, a tapering cascade normally made up of fruit and flowers. Festoons were popular decorative motifs that could be applied to any number of objects and you will see them throughout this exhibition. This unique festoon consists of metalworking tools—including an anvil, bellows, hammer, saws, and tongs—tapering down to a basket of chisels and nails. These are appropriate accoutrements to the upper scene where Vulcan, husband of Venus and god of fire, forges wings for his son Cupid, whose arrows cause those struck by them to fall in love. This engraving belongs to a series of six, each with a different deity and thematically-related festoon. For example, in another print, Apollo, who defeated the satyr Marsyas in a musical contest, sits atop a festoon of musical instruments.

As a group, the prints offer a range of designs for artisans, as well as visual and intellectual delight for collectors and museum visitors like ourselves.