

Fantastically French!

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

5: Jean-Philippe Boulle

These two horizontal prints are designs for inlaid furniture. So, instead of black figures on white paper, imagine this: the delightful scenes made up of people and animals interacting around an architectural frame would appear in shiny, golden-colored brass. All of that is set into a luminous, reddish-brown background of polished tortoiseshell and ebony wood that covers a piece of furniture such as an armoire or a table top. Similar designs would embellish other objects in sumptuous homes, such as clocks and side tables. The artist who made these particular designs, Jean-Philippe Boulle, came from a family of royal furniture makers. From his great-grandfather, who lived at the Louvre (now a famous museum, but at the time a royal palace), down to his father, who lived at Versailles and worked for King Louis XIV, there were four generations of royal cabinetmakers. The family's style was so well-known and so distinctive that it became known as the "Boulle" style. Take a moment to examine the inventive scenes before you. Can you find two hatching eggs and two peacocks?