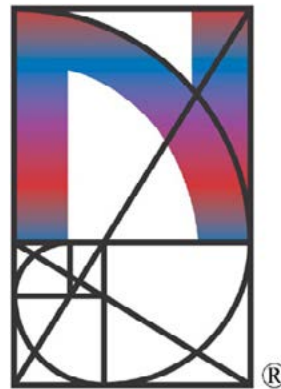


Catalogue 80:
Selected Prints by Érik Desmazières

Including Unique Painted and Expanded Prints
from the “Bibliotheque du Babel” Series and
Other Prints that are Book and Archive Related



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Erik Desmazières has been described as a “contemporary printmaker of breathtaking virtuosity” (*The Independent*, London, Dec. 1993), and “arguably the finest French printmaker of his generation” (Robert Flynn Johnson, Curator, Achenbach Foundation for the Graphic Arts), rendering with masterly draftsmanship subjects ranging from workshop interiors to fantasies in the tradition of Bosch, Piranesi and Goya. Desmazières’s images have an ethereal quality due to his close attention to detail and his grasp of atmospheric light.

Born in 1948, Desmazières graduated from the Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris in 1971 and spent the next two years studying printmaking under Jean Delpech at the Cours du Soir de la Ville de Paris. In 1978 he was awarded the prestigious Grand Prix des Arts de la Ville de Paris, and in 2008 he was elected a member of l’Académie des Beaux-Arts. Desmazières’s prints have been collected by a number of major institutions—including the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the British Museum (London) and the Library of Congress (Washington, DC)—and have been exhibited at over 100 galleries and museums in Europe, the United States and Japan.

We are offering here a selection of Desmazières’s iconic images, including eight plates and a preliminary drawing from his famous *La Bibliothèque de Babel*, the suite of nine etched and aquatint plates he prepared to illustrate Les Amis du Livre Contemporain’s limited fine-press edition of Jorge Luis Borge’s *La Biblioteca de Babel* (1997). Desmazières issued two separate suites of these plates, the *First Suite* in 1997 and the *Second Suite* in 1998; for the *Second Suite* Desmazières substantially reworked the images, expanding them to the edges of the printing plates and adding various details.

All the prints offered here are signed, dated and numbered by the artist, and all are archivally framed. Six of the prints have been extensively reworked by Desmazières in ink, watercolor and gouache to create one-of-a-kind images.

All items in mint condition unless otherwise described. The reference numbers identifying each entry are from *Erik Desmazières: Etchings 1991–2001* and *Erik Desmazières: Prints 2001–2011*, the third and fourth volumes of the Fitch-Febvrel Gallery’s catalogue raisonnée of Desmazières’s work. The quotations headlining the *Bibliothèque de Babel* plates are taken from the Godine edition of *The Library of Babel* (2000).

Images from “La bibliothèque de Babel”



“I declare that the Library is endless . . .”

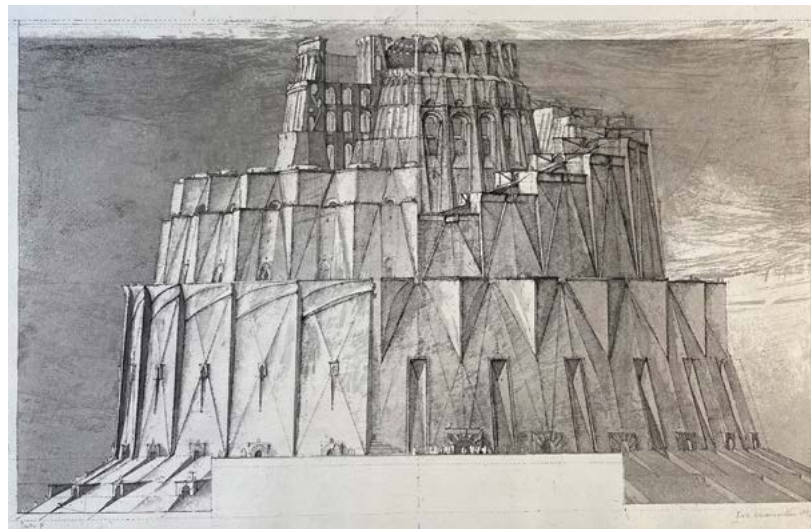
- 1.** La bibliothèque de Babel [ou l'entrée de la bibliothèque]. Etching and aquatint from the *First Suite*, extensively reworked and expanded in watercolor and gouache by the artist, creating a unique work intermediate between the first and second states of the print. Signed, titled and dated by the artist. 285 x 457 mm. (visible portion of image); sheet size 330 x 520 mm. 1997. Archivaly framed (frame measures 480 x 658 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 158. 51545 \$12,500



Previous page: Detail of the reworked image

Above: No. 1 shown with frame

Right: Example of an unworked version of the plate, shown for comparison purposes only. Not for Sale





2. La tour de Babel ou l'entrée de la bibliothèque. Etching and aquatint from the *Second Suite*. 1998. No. 44 of 60 copies on Lana Royal paper, signed, titled, numbered and dated by the artist in the lower margin. 305 x 492 mm. (plate mark); sheet size 570 x 377 mm. Archivaly framed (frame measures 580 x 760 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 158. 51546

\$4000

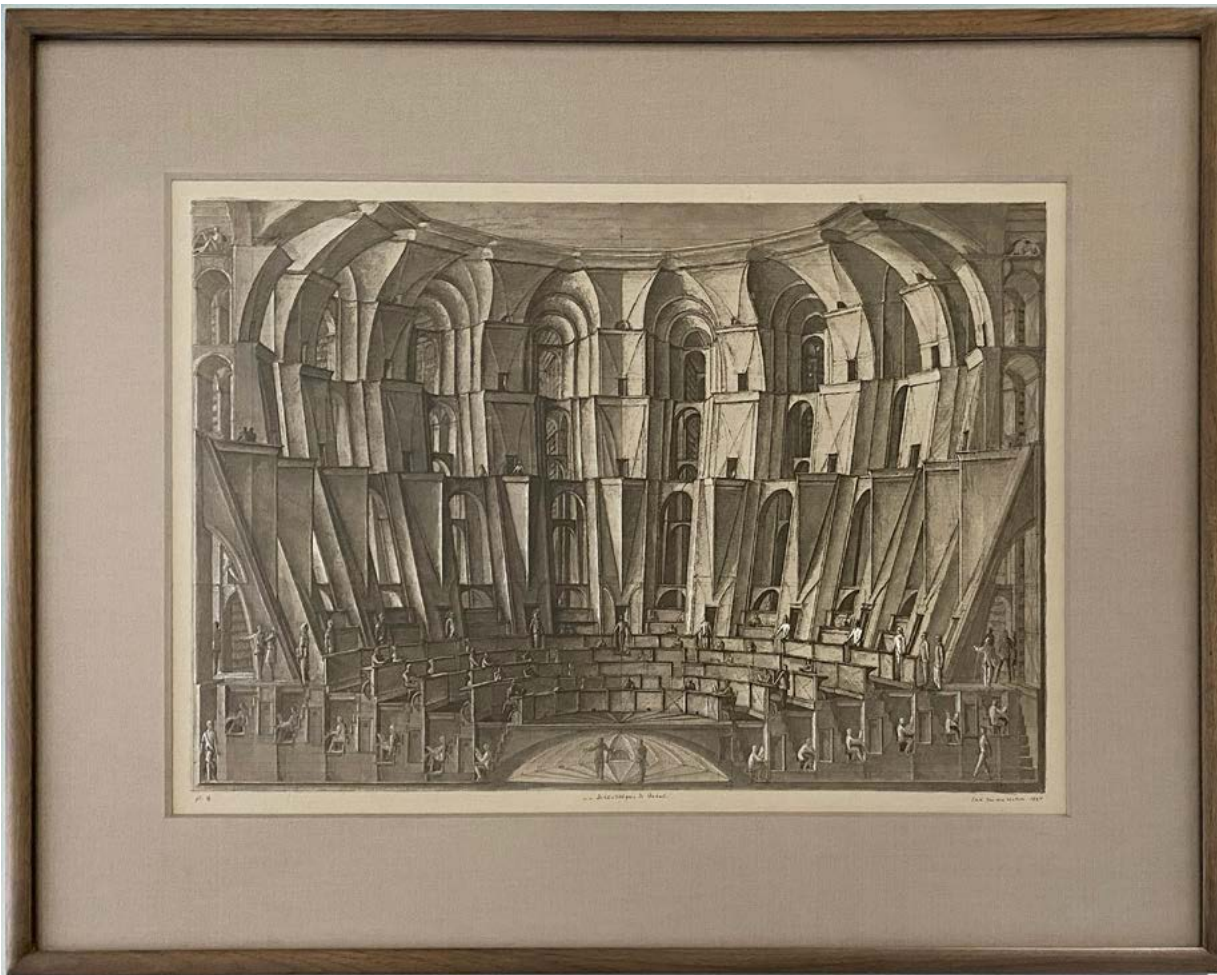


Below: Example of an unworked version of the plate, shown for comparison purposes only. Not for Sale



“The Universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite, perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries . . .”

3. La bibliothèque de Babel [Salle hexagonale]. Etching and aquatint on brown paper, *extensively reworked and expanded in watercolor, gouache and ink by the artist, creating a unique work between the first and second states of the print.* **Early state** of the plate from the *First Suite*. 1997. 355 x 266 mm. (plate mark). Signed, titled, dated and annotated “pl. 5” in ink by the artist in the lower margin. Fitch-Febvrel 161. Archivaly framed (frame measures 576 x 486 mm.). 40205 \$9500



Below: Example of an unworked version of the plate, shown for comparison purposes only. Not for Sale

“The Library is a sphere whose exact center is any hexagon and whose circumference is unattainable . . .”

4. La bibliothèque de Babel [Grand hémicycle]. Etching and aquatint on gray paper, *extensively reworked and expanded in watercolor, gouache and ink by the artist, creating a unique work between the first and second states of the print.* **Early state** of the plate from the *First Suite*, before reduction of the plate size. Signed, titled and dated by the artist; annotated indistinct “pl. 7” modified to “pl. 8” [sic] in ink by the artist. 1997. 305 x 485 mm. (plate mark). Archivaly framed (frame measures 575 x 760 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 163. 40206
\$12,500





“The universe was justified; the universe suddenly became congruent with the unlimited width and breadth of humankind’s hope . . .”

5. La salle des planètes. Etching and aquatint from the *Second Suite*. 1998. **One of 10 artist’s proofs** printed after the publication of the *Second Suite*, signed, titled, dated and annotated “épreuve d’artiste” in pencil by the artist. 300 x 490 mm. (plate mark). Archivaly framed (frame measures 575 x 760 mm.). The most elaborate of Desmazières’s visions of Borges’s work. Fitch-Febvrel 160. 40864

\$4500



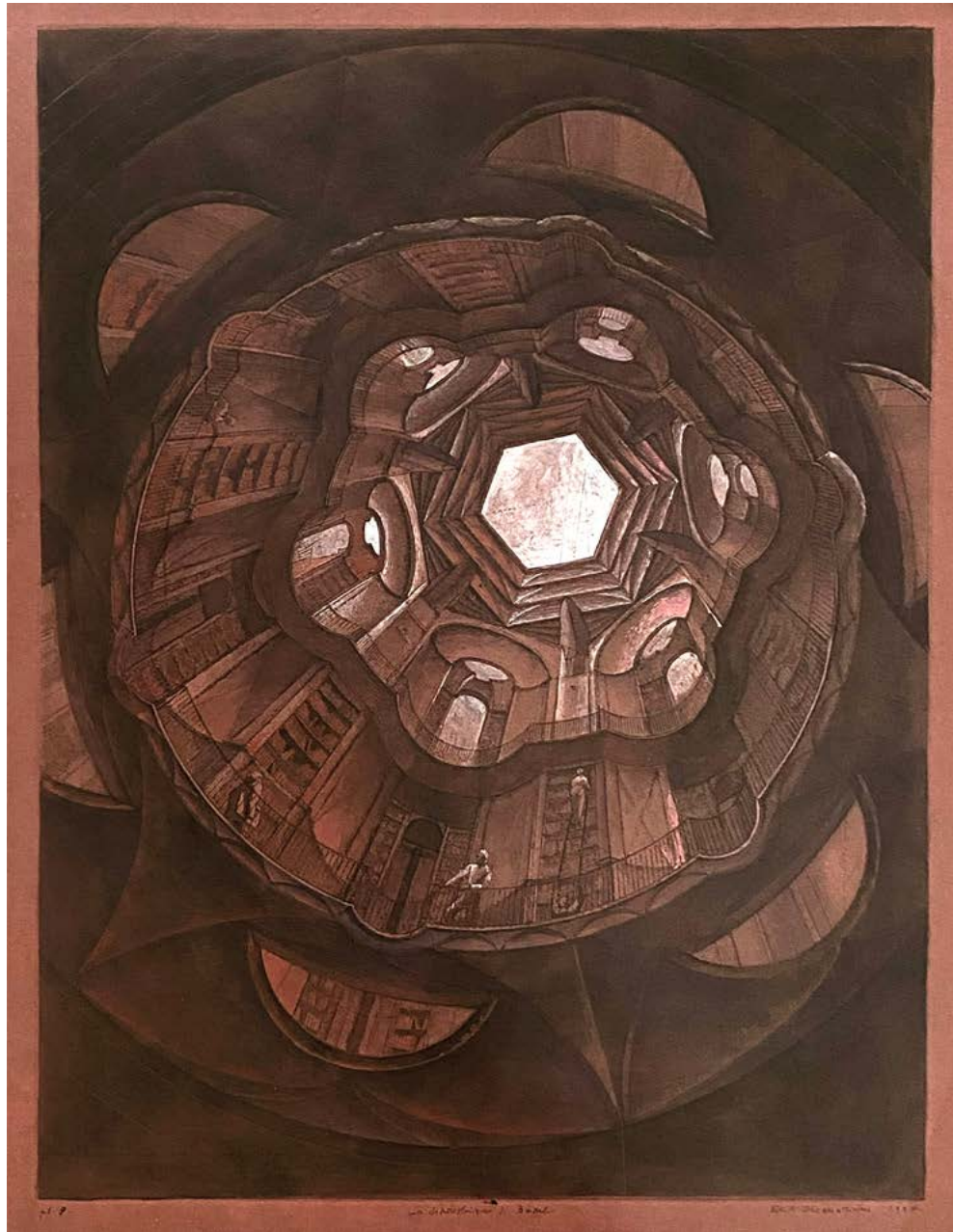
Below: Example of an unworked version of the plate, shown for comparison purposes only. Not for Sale



“On some shelf in some hexagon, it was argued, there must exist a book that is the cipher and perfect compendium of all other books . . .”

6. La bibliothèque de Babel [Contre-plongée.] Etching and aquatint, *extensively reworked and expanded in watercolor, gouache and ink by the artist, creating a unique work between the first and second states of the print.* Early state of the plate from the *First Suite*, before reduction of the plate size. Printed on brick red Fabriano Roma. Signed, titled, dated and annotated “Pl. 8” by the artist in the lower margin. 356 x 266 mm. (plate mark). 1997. Archivaly framed (frame measures 576 x 486 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 164. 40204

\$8500



No. 6: Detail of image



“There are twenty-five orthographic symbols. That discovery enabled mankind, three hundred years ago, to formulate a general theory of the Library . . .”

7. Alphabet imaginaire II. Ink and wash drawing on dark olive paper, highlighted in white gouache; made preliminary to preparing the printing plate for the *First Suite*. Signed and dated by the artist twice, in both upper and lower margins. 1997. 384 x 290 mm. (visible portion of image). Archivally framed (frame measures 590 x 493 mm.). See Fitch-Febvrel 165. 41417 \$8500

The drawing is a mirror image of the final print; compare with no. 8.

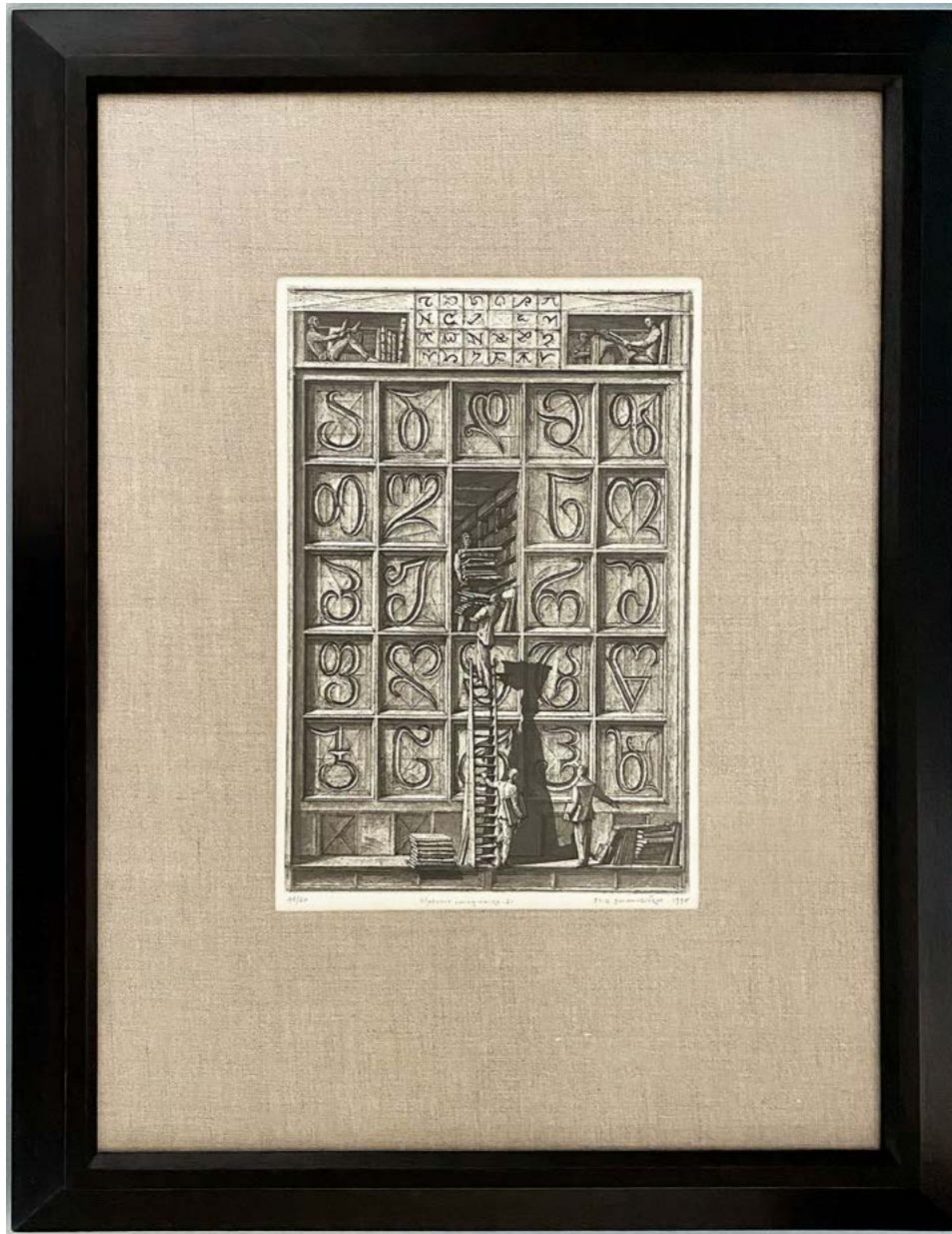


Below: Example of an unworked version of the plate, shown for comparison purposes only. Not for Sale



- 8.** Alphabet imaginaire II. Etching and aquatint from the *First Suite*, extensively reworked and expanded in watercolor, gouache and ink by the artist, creating a unique work between the first and second states of the print. Signed, titled and dated by the artist. 1997. 396 x 295 mm. (visible portion of image). Archivaly framed (frame measures 590 x 498 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 165. 51544
\$9500

Desmazière's augmentations at the top of the plate include two figures in the outer cartouches of the upper portion of the image, anticipating his reworking of this plate for the *Second Suite*; compare with no. 9.



9. Alphabet imaginaire II. Etching and aquatint from the *Second Suite*. 1998. No. 44 of 60 copies on Lana Royal paper, signed, titled, numbered and dated by the artist. 351 x 241 mm. (plate mark); sheet size 570 x 377 mm. Archivaly framed (frame measures 710 x 568 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 165. 42958 \$3500

Other Images



10. Quai de Montebello, Paris. Etching, aquatint and roulette. No. 13 of 75 copies on wove Lana Royal, signed, titled, numbered and dated by the artist. 2005. 593 x 587 mm. (plate mark). Archivaly framed (frame measures 934 x 857 mm.). This oversized plate depicts the Bouquinistes (riverside booksellers) on the Seine, the river, and the cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris. Fitch-Febvrel 196. 43820 \$4250



11. Rembrandts Kunst Caemer. Etching, aquatint and roulette. No. 83 of 150 copies on wove Jeanjean paper, signed, titled, numbered and dated by the artist. Amsterdam: Museum Het Rembrandthuis, 2007. 413 x 558 mm. (plate mark). Archivaly framed (frame measures 661 x 808 mm.). This print depicts Rembrandt's personal collection of "props" used in his art works. Fitch-Febvrel 200. 51542 \$2500

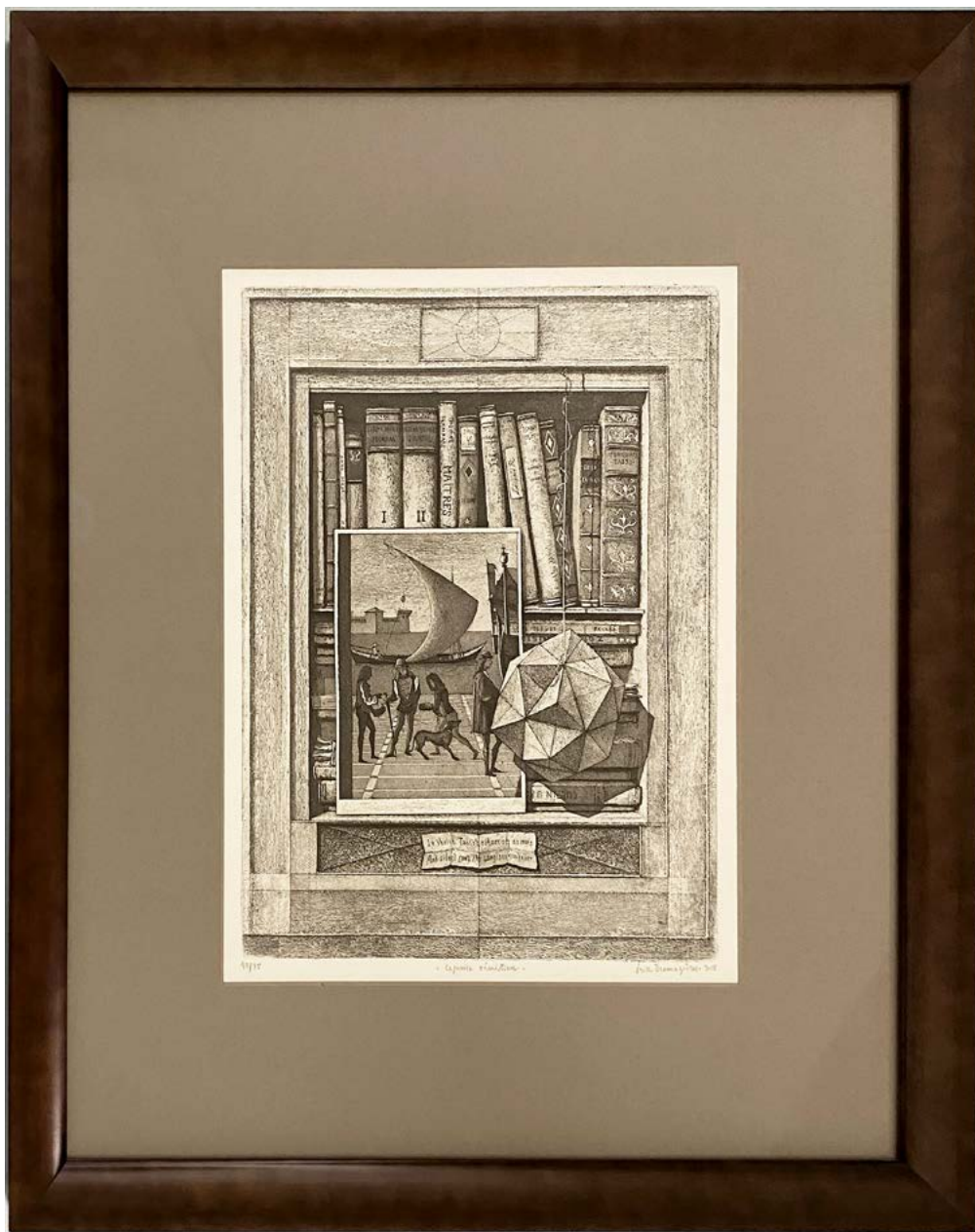


12. Théâtre de géographie. Etching, aquatint and roulette. No. 41 of 100 copies on thin laid Japan paper, printed to sheet edges; signed, numbered and dated by the artist. Printed for the deluxe edition of *Les lieux imaginaires d'Erik Desmazières*, the catalogue accompanying the 2007 exhibition at the Musée Jenisch. Vevey: Musée Jenisch, 2007. 197 x 264 mm. Archivaly framed (frame measures 350 x 417 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 201. 40207 \$650



13. Entrance hall with a globe. Etching, aquatint and roulette. No. 42 of 75 copies on wove BFK Rives, signed, numbered and dated by the artist. Printed for the deluxe edition of *Constructs and Inventions: The Etchings of Érik Desmazières*, the catalogue accompanying the 2009 exhibition at the Telfair Museum of Art. Savannah, GA: Telfair Museum of Art, 2009. 203 x 164 mm., printed to sheet edges. Archivaly framed (frame measures 377x 324 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 207. 40860

\$550

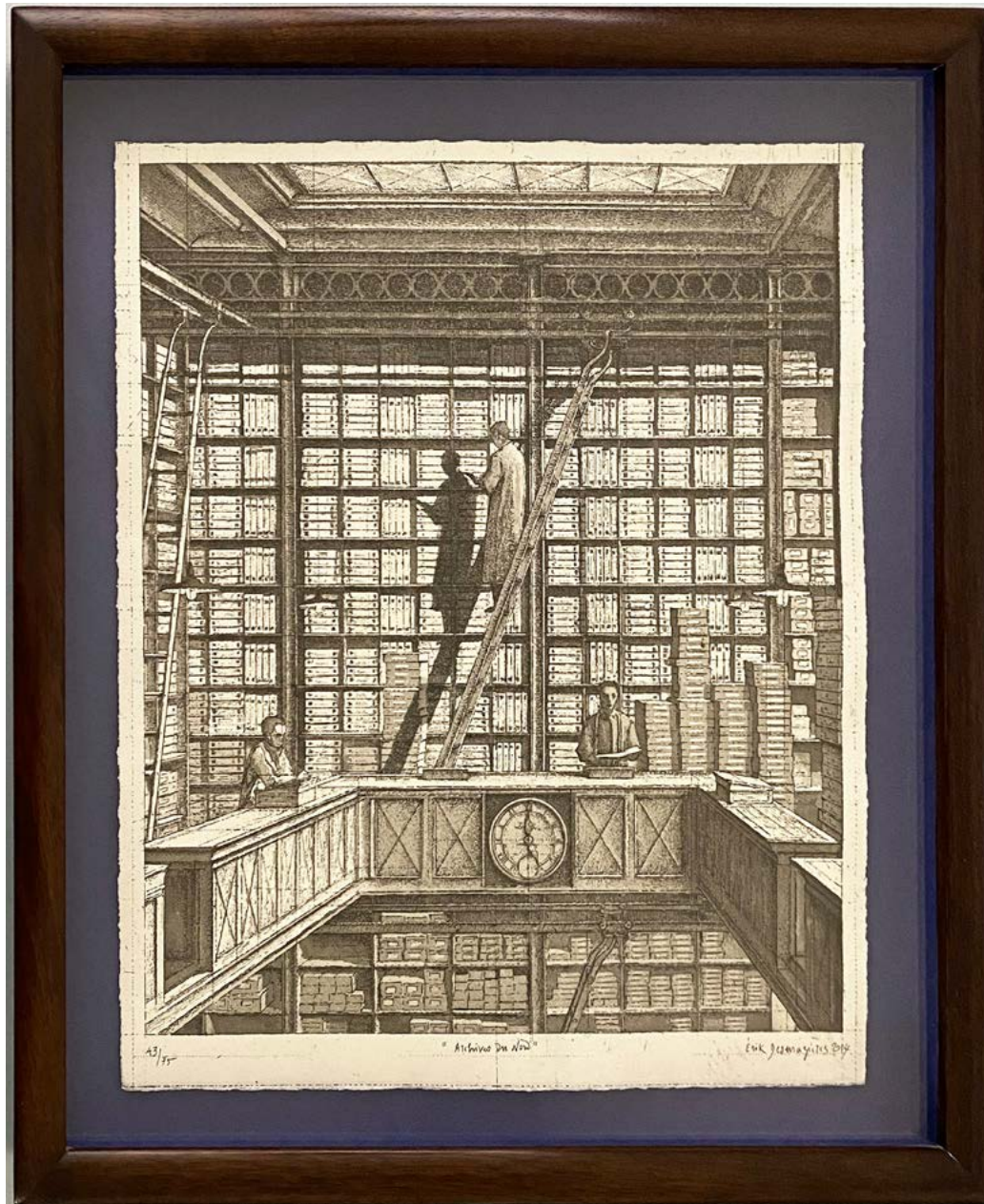


14. Caprice vénétien. Etching, aquatint and roulette. No. 43 of 62 examples printed on wove BFK Rives, signed, titled, numbered and dated by the artist. Neuchâtel: Galerie Ditesheim, 2010. 323 x 247 mm. Archivaly framed (frame measures 570 x 488 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 226. 42245 \$1250

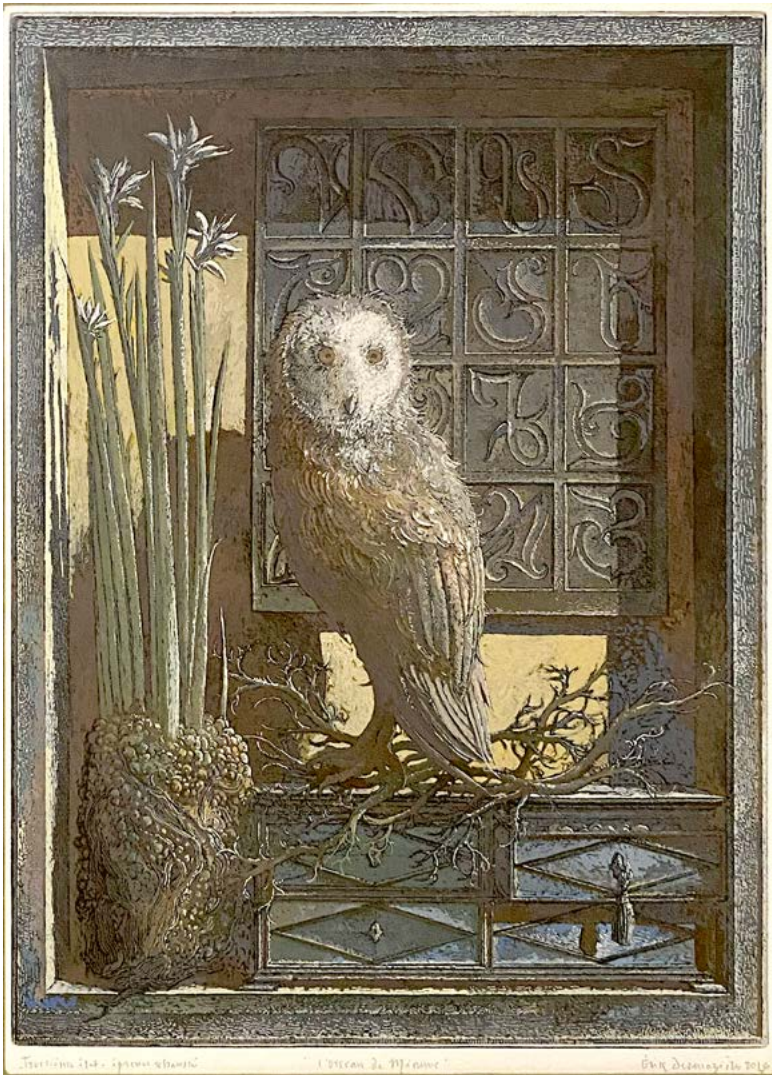


15. Bibliothèque & autres curiosités. Etching and aquatint printed in brown ink. No. 13 of 75 copies, signed, titled, numbered and dated by the artist. 2013. 293 x 202 mm., printed to sheet edges. Archivaly framed (frame measures 351 x 265 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 234. 43131

\$750



16. Archive du Nord. Etching, aquatint and roulette. No. 43 of 75 copies, signed, titled, numbered and dated by the artist, printed for the deluxe edition of *Érik Desmazières: Des mondes gravés*, the catalogue for the 2014 retrospective at the Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse. Lille: Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse, 2014. 275 x 235 mm., printed to sheet edges. Archivaly framed (frame measures 334 x 297 mm.). Fitch-Febvrel 246. 51543 \$600



No. 18: Detail of image

17. L'oiseau de Minerve. Etching, aquatint and roulette. Third state, printed on laid paper and *reworked by the artist in watercolor and gouache*; signed, titled, dated and annotated "Troisième état épreuve rehaussée" in pencil by the artist. 2015. 368 x 264 mm. (plate mark). Archivally framed (frame measures 630 x 518 mm.). This still-life, hand-painted by the artist, includes Minerva's Owl and Desmazière's imaginary alphabet developed for his Tower of Babel print series. Fitch-Febvrel 250. 43988 \$7500



Right: Example of an unworked version of the plate, shown for comparison purposes only. Not for Sale

