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Musée Jenisch - Cabinet Cantonal des
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Exhibition

Musée Jenisch – Cabinet Cantonal des
Estampes, Vevey

From October 30, 2015 to January 31, 2016

CLAUDE MELLAN **L'ÉCRITURE DE LA MÉTHODE**

Edited by Florian Rodari

The exhibition organized by the Cuendet Foundation in collaboration with the Cabinet Cantonal des Estampes, Musée Jenisch Vevey, examines the life of an engraver who was an unparalleled master in the art of handling the burin. His austere style, technical virtuosity, and beautiful images have always held a special attraction for his admirers. And indeed, Claude Mellan invented a totally new, highly rational approach to his art made up of a supple, airy line that gives light a prominent role in the finished work. He travelled to Rome with the baroque in full pomp and remained some seven years, first making copperplate prints of paintings by his master Simon Vouet, then moving on to produce engravings for the sculpture gallery of Count Giustiniani. Returning to Paris in 1642, he remained ensconced in the Louvre until his death. Although best known for his portraits, Mellan also depicted numerous examples of ancient sculpture and religious scenes, in which spectacular baroque effects are tempered by his uniquely spare and sober style of engraving, mindful as he was of the rules laid down by the leading lights of French classicism, Racine and Descartes. His idiosyncratic technique, particularly evident in the rendering of volume in the human figure and the marble of statues, needed to be planned in advance in distinct stages: it thus defined what has been called, appropriately for the period, the "écriture de la method." The exhibition and catalogue serve both to familiarise the public with the secrets of a craft and to provide examples of Mellan's pictures that are at once simple and majestic.

Florian Rodari is a Swiss writer. After spending a five-year period, from 1973 to 1978, in the Cabinet Cantonal des Estampes, Musée Jenisch Vevey, he worked as the director of Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne, from 1979 to 1983, where he organized several exhibitions. He was simultaneously a curator at the William Cuendet & Atelier de Saint-Prex Foundation, whose fine works have been on display at the Print Department of the Musée Jenisch, in Vevey, since 1989. As an independent exhibition organizer from 1994, he has devised exhibitions for museums in Switzerland and abroad, especially involving works on paper. He has contributed a large number of introductions to catalogues and is the author of several books on painting, drawing, photography, and engraving.