



GALERIE ARY JAN

LA PARIS BIENNALE  
From 8 to 16 September 2018 at the Grand Palais

For its fifth participation in the Paris Biennale, the Ary Jan Gallery remains devoted to its speciality – the Belle Epoque and Orientalist painting of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Always on the lookout for exceptional pieces, Mathias Ary Jan unveils an unpublished painting by Etienne Dinet (1861 - 1925) in this year's exhibition. This major Orientalist artist was one of the founding members of the Society of the French Orientalist Painters in 1893. Dinet was very fond of Algeria, where he first travelled in 1884. He settled permanently in Bou-Saada in 1905. Étienne Dinet was fluent in Arabic and converted to Islam; he was the painter of the country, its culture and people. No artist to date was able to better illustrate the Algerian way of life: the women in their daily occupations or adorned with their best outfits, the proud, laughing and carefree teenage girls, the caravaners on camel backs, the men in prayer, the colorful markets and the tranquility of the palm groves. A social life that was simultaneously warm, alive and authentic.



Étienne Dinet, *Bavards*, oil on panel, signed lower left and dated 1896. Dim: 20 x 28 in.

Here is a group of children, girls and boys, sitting in circle in the middle of a small street in Bou-Saada. Dinet enjoyed painting the various costumes, jewels and fabrics, more than the occupation of the children. He was a great colorist; creating majestic contrasts between the intense vermilion, the golden ochres and the deep blues. Presented at the Salon of 1896, this work did not show any artificial setting, but rather an almost ethnographic depiction. It revealed a sweet and authentic everyday life scene, the portrait of a culture Dinet did not know very well at that time. This work was immediately bought by an English collector, Mr Stevens, a customer of the Allard Gallery, who consequently got in touch with the painter and became one of his most important merchants.

Far from these anonymous Algerian children, this portrait of the renowned Sarah Bernhardt (1844 - 1923) was painted by her faithful friend Georges Clairin (1843 - 1919). For almost fifty years, the painter was the appointed portraitist of the actress, who managed to transform her life into a permanent spectacle. She knew how to perfectly capture the attention, inspire and earn admiration from her social sphere of painters, sculptors and photographers who represented the many facets of her diva existence.

The Ary Jan Gallery presents a rather intimate portrait of the actress. There is no artificiality or act in the pose of the model, but rather the confidence of a great lady who built an international career. When this portrait was painted, in 1893, Sarah Bernhardt became head of the Renaissance Theater, where she set up some of her greatest plays including *Phèdre* and the *Dame aux Camélias*.



Georges Clairin, *Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt*, oil on canvas signed lower right and dated 1893. Dim: 38 x 45,2 in.

At almost fifty years old, she still had an enchanting beauty, highlighted by the unconditional admiration of her faithful friend Clairin.

The painter represented the actress as she was probably coming back from a party, her opulent ball coat casually fallen from her shoulders. She opened the bow that emphasized the fineness of her waist. The framing, the colours and the quality of the countless folds of the dress resemble of some James Tissot's portraits from the same period.

Galerie Ary Jan

32 Avenue Marceau - 75008 Paris - France

+33 1 42 61 42 10 - +33 6 07 88 75 84

[contact@galericaryjan.com](mailto:contact@galericaryjan.com)

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