



Henri Emilien Rousseau (1875-1933)



*"Cavaliers au bazaar du Caire, Egypte"*

Oil on canvas signed and dated 1902 lower right

21.26 x 25.59 inch

First of nine children, Henri Rousseau was born in Cairo, Egypt. He lived there until he was nine, when his father left his position of Secretary of State for the viceroy of Egypt. The family settled in Versailles in 1885. A diligent pupil, he studied math at the high school Hoche in 1893. During summer 1894, Rousseau decided to prepare the School of Fine Arts. He was introduced to Gérôme by his father, who met him in Egypt, and became his pupil in the School of Fine Arts.

He won the second Grand Prix of Rome in 1900 and a grant from the French Artists Salon. He travelled to Belgium, Holland, North Africa, Spain and Italy where he admired all the great masters like Rubens, Rembrandt, Vélasquez, Murillo, Titien and Raphaël. He followed the path of the painter and writer Eugène Fromentin, which he read and admired the works.

In 1901, he spent about six months in Tunisia and Algeria. After this initiatory trip, he settled in Versailles and took a studio at the Villa des Arts in Paris. Between 1902 and 1913, he painted French countrysides landscapes. Rousseau had a contract with the gallery George Petit since 1908 and embodied the succession of Constant Troyon. However, Henri Rousseau did not stop travelling and went regularly to North Africa.

In 1919 he moved to Aix-en-Provence with his family. It was the beginning of his Provençal period. Rousseau had a regular bourgeois and fortunate clientele and exhibited in Paris, Brussels, Stockholm, Marseille. He went on his last trip in Morocco in 1930 and 1932, where he worked in the Middle Atlas.

Henri Rousseau was a very educated and rigorous man, and was not paying attention to all the artistic movements of his period. He handled the movement and the color with dexterity, distrusting the picturesque and the oriental exoticism. His favourite subjects were the nomadic riders of the high plateaus. He painted them in movement, going to the market, hunting with the hawk or going for an expedition. His love for horses inspired him these words, written to his wife in 1902: " My purpose, this time, is the Arab horse. Our European horses cannot give the idea of this flexibility which glitters in the light, of this feminine and firm elegance reminding that of the feline". He never painted harems, inaccessible to the Westerners.

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