

Biography

A daughter of a Navy Officer, Marie Aimée Lucas-Robiquet was a student of Felix Joseph Barrias at the school of Beaux-Arts in Paris. A specialist of orientalist painting, she regularly exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Français from 1879. She painted famous religious and military scenes, landscapes of Brittany and Holland, as well as portraits of women adorned with pink and black satin, similar to Manet's style. But it was most of all her paintings about Algeria and Tunisia that made her successful. She depicted in particular numerous scenes of market, dates picking, weavers and washerwomen. She was also an active exhibitor at the Colonial Society of French Artists and at the Salon of the Society of French Orientalist Painters, presenting canvasses in bright colours which turned small towns of North Africa into dazzling extravaganzas with contrasting brushstrokes. She also took part in the Colonialist exhibitions in Marseille in 1906 and 1922. Marie Lucas-Robiquet received various prizes, including a third class medal in 1894, and a second class medal in 1905. She was awarded the Order of the Legion of Honour. Her canvas painted in vibrating colours showed an idealised vision of rural life, turning them into theatre scenes, as in her works "Intérieur arabe à Orellal" and "Récolte de dattes en Algérie". This artist also portrayed familiar scenes and was known for her portraits in Europe, the United States and in South America as well.

The painting we present depicts a young wool spinner. Indeed, in North Africa, it was very common for young girls to learn craftwork and household labour in their family from a young age. The weaving of burnous, " haïks " and carpets was often executed at home. Furthermore, children's nimble fingers were often more appropriate for this work than adult's ones. They carded wool, spun it and weaved it, to make clothes, carpets, and all kinds of accessories. Schools were even created in North Africa to encourage local craft industry, as weaving, leather work and embroidery. The delicate labour of spinning with the distaff held in one hand by women offered a particularly attractive show for the artists then. Moreover, the feminine gesture of the spinner reminded them of Antiquity. At this time, painters could contemplate them everywhere in Algeria : in the mountains of Kabylie or Aures, in high plateaus as in old traditional cities, in sedentary ksour as in the tent of nomads. Among the famous artists who represented this subject are: Fromentin, Landelle, Guillaumet, Levy-Dhurmer, Bompard, Girardet, Delahogue, Friant, Taupin, Gasté, Leroy, Estienne, Bridgman, Deshayes, Galland, Birck, Germain-Thill, Herzig... This theme was the occasion for Marie-Aimée Lucas-Robiquet to produce her most beautiful canvasses. She privileged the beauty of women and their natural attitudes, while stressing on sources brightness in the painting. She took up exactly the same model as the one presented here in one of her big compositions.

Museums

Musées des Beaux-Arts:

Alger, Amiens, Avranches, Montpellier, Nancy, Rouen.

Bibliography

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