



Eugène Lami

1800-1890

The queen Margot

Watercolor on paper signed with monogram E.L. and dated 1880 centre left

Dimensions : 21 x 16 cm

Dimensions : 8.27 x 6.30 inch

Literature : Described In the catalog raisonné of Paul-André Lemoine, Paris H.Champion 1914, p.337 n°1495

Origin : Former property of the Baroness of Roujoux

Private collection, France



Dimensions with frame : 42 x 38 cm
Dimensions with frame : 16.54 x 14.96 inch

This painting represents Queen Margot in a scene from the opera 'Les Huguenots' composing by Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791 - 1864) where she is sitting under an arbour with caryatids. The figure of Marguerite de Valois has nourished the history of the arts particularly in the novel by Alexandre Dumas published in 1845.

Biography

Eugène Lami was born in a family who used to work for the Empire. The military reviews, the uniforms' spectacle and the radiance of the imperial regime left his mark on the young boy. He even saw Napoleon at the age of ten, during a visit to the museum.

His family was attached with the Vernet, and this is very naturally that he became friend with Horace, who used to share his admirations and his enthusiasms.

In 1817, Eugène Lami entered the school of Fine Arts, where he was taken the Baron Gros' class, near Delaroche and the British watercolor Bonington, of whom he stayed very close to. He met Gericault, Chateaubriand and Auber in Horace Vernet's studio, that was then a centre of liberal opposition to the regime. He naturally began his artistic career as Horace Vernet's colleague by illustrating the " Collection of the French army's uniforms from 1791 to 1814 ".

He first participated at the Salon of French Artists in 1824, with a " Horses study " and then was exhibited every years until 1878, except between 1844 and 1847 when he was working in Chantilly. Awarded with the Legion of Honor in 1837, he was promoted to Officer in 1862 and won a second class medal in the 1855's Salon. He went to London in 1826, the necessary step for every 'modern' artist of his time.

In Spite of his liberal opinions, he has been chosen to illustrate the famous " Quadrille of Marie Stuart ", the memorable ball organised in the Tuileries by the Duchess of Berry in 1829.

Consequently, Eugène Lami moved towards scenes of genre, painting the elegant life of the court and bourgeoisie. He opted for watercolor, that became his favorite way of paint for his entire life. He realised many illustrations for Alfred de Musset's works that was exhibited at the Salon of French Artists in 1859, 1861 and 1867 and also was illustrated Manon Lescaut (Salon of 1868) and Gil Blas (Salon of 1878).

Horace Vernet presented him to the Duke of Orléans, with whom Lami was quickly united by a real friendship. Logically, the monarchy of July made him the chronicler of the court. Lami obtained many requests for the Museum of French History in Versailles, where, like his friend Vernet, he showed his talent as a battle's painter.

Pushed to exile because of the february revolution, he settled in London in 1848 and exhibited at the Royal Academy. He obtained rapidly a strong success near the British high society. Back to France in 1852, Lami began under the Second Empire a new official career even more prestigious. He advocated the return of Venetian rococo style, when he was realised the entire decoration of Ferrières castle for the baron James de Rothschild.

In 1879, he was one of the founder of the Society of French painters in watercolor. The enthusiasm for watercolors was so high at this time that a group of artists, finding their works too tight in the drawing rooms of the Salon, decided to exhibit in a specific place. For the first edition there were forty different painters.

Eugène Lami has painted all along the 19th century and is still one of the most important painter in watercolor of that period.

Museums

Carnavalet

Louvre

Château de Versailles

Getty Museum
Royal Collection London

Bibliography

Bénézit, Dictionnaire des peintres, Edition Grund, 1999.?

Gérald Schurr, Pierre Cabanne Les petits maîtres de la peinture, Les éditions de l'amateur, 1989.

Les années romantiques, catalogue d'exposition, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes