



Ferdinand Heilbuth

1826-1889

The conversation

Watercolor and gouache on paper signed lower left

Dimensions : 45,3 x 59,3 cm

Dimensions : 17.72 x 23.23 inch

Exhibition : Villa du temps retrouvé, Cabourg. From March to November 2023



Dimensions with frame : 59 x 73 cm
Dimensions with frame : 23.23 x 28.74 inch

Biography

French painter of German descent, Heilbuth Ferdinand was the son of a rabbi and like his father he seemed fated to follow the family religious vocation. He began rabbinical studies that allowed him to undertake numerous trips to Rome, Antwerp and Munich. But in 1843, the young man decided to suspend his religious studies and went to Paris to study painting beside Charles Gleyre and Paul Delaroche.

In 1852, Ferdinand Heilbuth took part for his first time in the Paris Salon, and displayed historical works with a romantic influence, as well as portraits. He drew his inspiration from religious scenes, and liked to include cardinals in his mise-en-scène. His paintings, such as Torquato Tasso at the court of Ferrare were very popular among the spectators and praised by the art critics. He obtained his first medal in 1857, and then in 1861 he was appointed Knight of the French Légion d'honneur.

Starting from 1868, the artist devoted himself to landscape painting and exhibits at the Paris Salon By the water, and this work is in perfectly contrasts with his prior inspiration. This is a milestone in the Heilbuth's carrier: the artist sought a brighter palette and a more bucolic style. Indeed, he frequented the dance halls and guinguettes on the Seine's shores, and befriended Sisley, Monet as well as Manet. The latter will have a great influence on the artist, especially in his search for light tones.

As a mobile and studious artist, Heilbuth settled in London during the Franco-Prussian war. In the course of that stay, he observed Turner's work, and carried out numerous pictures of the Thames that will be further exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1871.

Back in France in 1878, he acquired the French citizenship. As his style turned towards expression of light and atmospheric variations, he mainly painted on the Seine's shores. His painting perfectly shows the artist's position: he did follow the Impressionism themes but not all of its dictates. He distanced himself from the impressionist painters by keeping an observer point of view that enabled him to transpose on the spot all the details of the subjects observed.

During his lifetime, Heilbuth knew great success, and Théophile Gautier even compared him to Henri Heine and critics saw in him a reminder of Watteau. Here is the beautiful Castagnary's tribute to the artist: "So far, we only knew Mr. Heilbuth as a lovely and graceful dreamer, influenced by two distinct feelings at the time of his youth, that of Rubens and that of Venetians; seeking to create his own style, away from modern concerns, a style where the beauty of the gesture, the depth of expression and the shine of the fabrics would play their role with no harm."

Museums

Musée du Louvre,

Musée d'Orsay

Musée des Beaux Arts : Bayeux, Bordeaux, Saint Lo, Dijon, Avignon

Hambourg

Londres Collection Wallace,

Sydney

Saint-Petersbourg, Musée de l'Ermitage

Bibliography

Castagnary, Les Artistes au XIXème siècle, Salon de 1861, Gravure par H. Linton, notices par Castagnary,

1ère série, Paris, Librairie nouvelle de 1861

G.Schurr, 1820-1920, Les Petits maitres de la peinture valeur de demain, Paris, Les Editions de l'amateur, 1975

Les Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art au Luxembourg, Ludovic Baschet, Paris, 1881

La Chronique des arts et de la curiosité, 3 mai 18663, numéro 24