



Henri-Frédéric Schopin

1804-1880

The corrida

Oil on canvas signed and dated 1856 lower right

Dimensions : 125 x 160 cm

Dimensions : 49.21 x 62.99 inch



Dimensions with frame : 170 x 205 cm  
Dimensions with frame : 66.93 x 80.71 inch

Painted in 1856, our picture depicts the drama of bullfighting, whose tragedy did not escape Henri Frédéric Schopin's brush.

Here, the artist calls on his mastery of historical painting to share with us this fatal moment in the arena. The scene most likely takes place in Catalonia, whose colors adorn the emblems around the dressing rooms of the dignitaries present.

During the 19th century, part of the fascination of bullfighting was due to the art of a few famous toreros, and until the beginning of the 21st century, the "toreo de legos" predominated. Faced with the power, aggressiveness and temperament of fast, muscular beasts with sharp horns, there was no question of playing statue or "composing the figure". Man must rely on his footwork to dodge the bull's repeated assaults. Bullfighting is above all a combat, with emotion as its main attraction. Picadors remain indispensable auxiliaries. The test of the spades, sometimes repeated five, six or seven times, and costing the lives of several horses, is the only way to reduce the animal's strength and speed.

This is the moment the history painter chooses to depict. All the movement is concentrated in the foreground, and while the bull has already knocked one of the picadors to the ground, he is now goring the horse in the center of the composition. Frightened and suffering the assault, the stallion gives us a look of pain. The painter employs the full range of his technique to depict the main scene in great detail, while the background seems to melt into a haze of dust and sand. His sense of narrative is mastered, and he succeeds in making us vibrate to the rhythm of the tragedy of the moment.

Mostly depicted by Spanish painters such as Francisco de Goya in the early 19th century, bullfighting was also the subject of magnificent paintings by Édouard Manet from 1865 onwards, and of course a recurring theme in the work of Pablo Picasso.

## Biography

Born in Lübeck, Germany from French parents, Henri-Frédéric Schopin was the son of sculptor Jean-Louis Théodore Chopin who worked to the decoration of the Imperial Palace of Saint Petersburg upon Catherine II of Russia's request. The young boy received his first artistic learning with his father. Between 1821 and 1831, Schopin studied at the Paris' Fine-Arts School in the studio of Baron Gros.

From 1826, he applied for the competition of Great Prize of painting in Rome and won the second rank in 1830. He improved again his technique and gained the First Great Prize of Rome in 1831 for history painting, thanks to his swift and vigorous style.

During his stay in Rome, the painter prepared carefully his return to Paris and sent four paintings during the 1835's Paris Salon. Here, he directly obtained a first-class medal and was going to exhibit at the Salon until 1879.

In 1830, he married Nathalie-Sophie Dailly and became the son in law of the actor Armand-Dailly, member of the Comédie-Française. From 1831, the painter decided to change his name by appending a "S" in front of his surname to be distinguished from the young pianist Frédéric Chopin, already famous in the Parisian society at that time.

Due to his perfect style, Henri-Frédéric Schopin was famous as well in history painting and religious painting than in portraits, scenes of genre, landscapes or even orientalist paintings.

Two large battle scenes "La Prise d'Antioche" and "La Bataille d'Hohenlinden " have been ordered by King Louis-Philippe to Schopin for the Museum of History, opened in the Palace of Versailles in 1837. A few years later in 1860, Napoleon III acquired three paintings directly in Schopin's studio. Nominated knight of the Legion of Honor in 1854, Schopin became member of the Imperial Academy of Russia during a stay in Saint-Petersburg. Many of his paintings have been engraved by Jazet, and helped him to make his name famous.

## Museums

Château de Versailles, Galerie des Batailles

Toulouse, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Douai, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Metz, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Compiègne, Musée du Second Empire

Paris, Musée du Petit Palais

Wallace Collection

## Bibliography

Bénézit, Dictionnaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs, Gründ, 1999.

Bellier de la Chavignerie et Auvray, Dictionnaire général des artistes de l'école française.