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Victor Gabriel Gilbert

1847-1933

"Les cuisiniers"

Oil on panel / Signed lower right

Dimensions : 44,5 x 54,5 cm

Dimensions : 17.32 x 21.26 inch

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Biography

Raised in Paris, Victor Gilbert suffered from poor health during his childhood, which prevented him from following in his father's career, who was a carpenter for Pleyel and Wolf. However, his natural ability for drawing was noticed by his family, but it was insufficient for him to enter the Fine Arts School. Therefore, he was placed at the age of thirteen as an apprentice with Eugène Adam, painter and decorator. He went there during the day and took art lessons in the evening under the supervision of Père Levasseur at the Ecole de la Ville in Paris. This was the only official artistic training he received.

Gilbert began to exhibit his still lifes at the Salon of French Artists. In 1873, he exhibited two paintings and in 1874, two others. One of them, called "Le pot au feu", and was bought by a collector. During the middle of the 1870s, Victor Gilbert received financial support from Père Martin, whose shop in rue Laffitte had been an artistic centre since the 1850s. Martin, who was the dealer of Boudin and Jongkind, was a great help to Gilbert. At the 1875 Salon, his "Portrait de Madame M." brought him sufficient success, so that he gave up decorative painting.

At the end of the 1870s, Gilbert went back to his favorite subjects: street scenes, cafés, markets and especially the central food market of Paris: les Halles. Indeed, Gilbert became " the painter of les Halles ", showing the work of the market sellers, to which he was particularly sensitive. Unpacking the fish at daybreak, or the meat market took up again the work themes that Zola illustrated as the energy and the dynamism of Paris at that time. In his early works, the colours used by Gilbert were often dark, as they were in Bonvin's work, and they had the atmosphere of what are known as "realist" painters. These scenes were much appreciated because they combined still life and pictures, just like the poorer classes and the bourgeoisie. Under the influence of the impressionists, Gilbert progressively softened his palette and focuses more on the effects of the light.

At the 1880 Salon, Gilbert gained a first recompense with a second class medal, and his painting "The Fish Market, morning" was acquired by the State. Two other paintings of the food market were exhibited at the 1881 Salon and made him the official genre painter in Paris, ensuring his reputation. Even though he continued exhibiting street scenes at the beginning of the 20th century, his best period for these subjects was probably between 1875 and 1890. He won a silver medal at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1889. He was made chevalier of the Legion of Honour in 1897 and received the Bonnat Prize in 1926.

Museums

Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille
Musée Malraux, Le Havre
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Bayeux ?Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dieppe
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux
Musée de Liège
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau

Bibliography

E. Bénézit : Dictionnaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs
G. Schurr : Dictionnaire des petits maîtres du XIXème
Bellier de la Chavignerie et Auvray : Dictionnaire général des artistes de l' école française