



Ferdinand Roybet

1840-1920

Savants

Oil on panel / signed upper right

Dimensions : 62 x 59,5 cm

Dimensions : 24.41 x 23.23 inch

Biography

After a childhood spent in the café held by his family in Uzès, Ferdinand Roybet settled in Lyon with his parents. At the age of seventeen, the young man entered the Vibert's etching class, but left it soon after to study painting. In 1863, he took part in a school competition with Saint Irénée martyr and sold his first painting the following year. In 1864, following his father's death, he settled alone in Paris. Through hard and persevering work he rapidly improved his skills and gave birth to his own distinctive style. His career began in 1865 at the Salon with two paintings that prefigured his taste for scenes from the Renaissance and past centuries. That same year, he also exhibited two etchings at the Society of Aquafortistes.

In 1866, he exhibited a big painting called the Fou sous Henri III (Grenoble, museum of Beaux-Arts), which was such a great success that he was purchased by Princess Mathilde, thus establishing him as a talented artist and endowing him with a prominent reputation. This work illustrated the strong irruption of colour in Roybet's paintings, which from then he used in a very original way. His pursuing of a retrospective style, that he had mostly acquired in the Lyon School of painting, was encouraged by this success. It corresponded to the artistic ideals of the Second Empire, fond of historical reconstructions. The next Salons confirmed his success with the public as well as critics and buyers (Le Duo, 1867 ; Les Joueurs de Trictrac, 1868). In 1871, Ferdinand Roybet made his first travel to Holland and developed his knowledge of old masters, executing several copies of their works there. He specially discovered the strength of Frank Hals's works and from them he learned how to be more clever at putting colors on the canvas and how to put light tones with the brush's point in a particular way. He also acquired, through the example of Hals, a new manner of emphasizing faces over dark backgrounds and austere clothes. Besides, he also learnt a lot from the study of Rembrandt, Téniers, Rubens, Jordaens and Brouwer. During the year 1872, he travelled in Algeria, where he made many quill drawings, in which his characteristic freedom of line can be noticed. From this period, he began to paint the first musketeers and gentlemen which made his renown.

After an outbreak of many years, Roybet exhibited at the 1892 Salon, and made a triumphal comeback that same year (Portrait of Juana Romani). In 1893, he received the Médaille d'Honneur for his painting Charles le Téméraire entrant à cheval dans l'église de Nesle. This scene of historical reconstruction and off huge dimensions assured the artist's reputation abroad, and was exhibited overseas. At the same time, he pursued a career of portraiture renowned among the American and French bourgeoisie, giving a psychologically truly exact, and socially satisfying picture of his models. Among his portraits are the famous Comte Potocki, Jules Lefebvre, Cormon, and Madame Olympe Hériot (1891), revealing the influence of Japanese prints, which he studied the composition of. Roybet had a lot of success at Salon, showing successively some of his most important works : Propos galants 1893, La Main chaude 1894, La Sarabande 1895, L'Astronome 1898, Les Savants 1901, Le Refus des impôts 1909.

At this time, Roybet had an international standing. For example, La Sarabande was demanded in numerous exhibitions, not only in province, but also abroad, such as in Venice and Copenhagen. The artist was then at the top of his skills, and after having composed big scenes of genre in a stunning brushwork, he progressively focused on compositions in which the essential part of the work was to build in the expression of various characters. His visits in Italy as well as his travel to Spain, where he studied Velasquez for a long time, maybe enhanced this tendency, which increased at the end of his life. His growing renown attracted many pupils, as well as some Anointed?, among them Consuelo Fould. Nominated Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in 1893, he became Officer and a member of the Institut. He also obtained the Medal of honour at the Universal Exhibitions from Anvers (1894), Berlin and Vienna. At the end of his life, he focused on religious subjects.

Roybet, whose painting is characterised by a highly firmness brushwork, often shows portraits in glittering silk

costumes, inspired from the end of the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. He transposes contemporary men and women in the past time, considered as a golden period, and invested by the prestige of History. The artist mostly excels in the representation of musketeers and people of the Court from the eighteenth century. His canvas were a great success with the public of Salons. Together with portraits, he produced numerous scenes of genre or historical reconstitutions. The technical virtuosity of Roybet, as well as his sense of adornment and his generous and strong touch, related him to Rubens and the Flemish school. With his taste for history, his noble interpretation of current scenes and his passion for Flemish masters of the seventeenth century, of which he had assimilated the technique in an amazing way, Roybet totally embraces the aesthetic expectations of the society of its time. His work is enormous. Beside, he collected numerous works of art, turning his studio into a real museum of medieval art, his favourite period, although his painting subjects mostly correspond to seventeenth century.

A museum is devoted to his work in Courbevoie.

Museums

Amiens, Avignon, Bagnols, Bordeaux, Boston, Bucarest (Sima), Cologne, Courbevoie, Dunkerque, Grenoble, Lyon, Montpellier, Montréal (Learmont), Moscou (Tretiakoff), Mulhouse, New York (Metropolitan Museum), Nice, Paris (Louvre, Luxembourg), Reims, Rouen.

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