

Biography

Georges Rochegrosse was born in Versailles in 1859. Abandoned by his father as a young child, he was brought up by his mother and her second husband, the poet Theodore de Banville, who introduced him early to the artistic and intellectual parisian elite. He took his first painting classes with the artist Alfred Dehodencq, a good friend of his step-father. Aged 12, he entered the Julian Academy and studied in the studios of Jules Lefèvre and Gustave Boulanger, therefore receiving an education both academical and modern. Later he would become a drawing teacher himself.

Meanwhile, he got into the Beaux-Arts Academy. In 1882, he presented a work at the Salon, " Vitellius hailed by the people in the streets of Rome " ,(Museum of Sens), and was awarded a medal . Every following year he exhibited at the Salon; his paintings were sophisticated compositions, inspired by Egyptian, Roman or Byzantine civilisations, and rich in genuine historical features that Theodore de Banville enjoyed finding inside parisian libraries for his adoptive son .

From 1870, he illustrated the works of his friends poets and writers, (Baudelaire, Victor Hugo). In 1894, he travelled to Algeria, willing to find inspiration to illustrate Gustave Flaubert 's novel " Salambô ".

Instantly seduced by the country, he decided to settle there with his wife Marie Leblond. A very beautiful woman, she would become his muse for the following 30 years, posing as an Empress, a goddess or an oriental seducer. They were spending all their winters in El-Biar, a small village perched in the woods above Algiers, in their beautiful villa " Djenam Meryen ",ornated with greek columns, huge terraces, oriental ceramiques and rugs, and heavy colourful fabrics which the artist will reproduce in many of his paintings.

Later on, Rochegrosse will be named a professor at the Art Academy in Algiers. In 1906 he will receive a medal of honour for his painting "La Joie Rouge ", which is now in the foyer of the Opera in Algiers. Another substantial picture " La course au bonheur " is in the Algiers Museum .

Being considered as a master of algerian painting, his reputation was such that local artists associations like the Algerian Artists Salon, the Art Union of North Africa, the Algerian orientalist artists Salon, or the Algerians artists Union, all wanted him to become their Honour President or member of the Jury.

Museums

Algiers, Museum of Fine Arts

Paris, Musée d'Orsay, Manufacture des Gobelins, Maison de Victor Hugo

Museums of Fine Arts, Amiens, Grenoble, Rouen, Lille, Nantes, Mulhouse, Sens

Bibliography

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