



Jan Baptist Huysmans

1826-1906

The painter's visit to Damascus, Syria

Oil on board / Signed lower center, JB Huysmans

Dimensions : 49,5 x 61,5 cm

Dimensions : 19.29 x 24.02 inch

## Biography

Painter of history, genre and religious scenes, and an Orientalist, Jan Baptist Huysmans was born in Antwerp on April 25, 1826. From 1843 to 1849, he studied in the Fine Art Academy of his native city, where he exhibited his works twice, in 1850 (Charles VI and Odette) and in 1853.

In 1856, he set off on a journey which will lead him towards Greece, Turkey, and the Middle-East. He settled there for a while, in Palestine - painting great size religious murals for the churches of Jerusalem - in Syria, in Egypt and in Algeria. He started Orientalist painting in 1857 and at the same time he was publishing his journey's souvenirs that he illustrated. " A Journey to Italy and the East ", in 1856-1857, " A Journey toward Spain and Algeria ", in 1862.

He did some substantial mural paintings for the churches of Erpe and Jerusalem and for the communal houses of Geel and Comines in Belgium. He then established himself in Paris for a few years before returning definitely to his native country.

Jan-Baptist Huysmans is one of the most famous travelers of the Belgian Orientalist school. In 1858, he made a second trip to Syria, and especially to Damascus, one of the cities that impressed him the most.

Like many travelers of his time, Jan Baptist Huysmans had to be able to paint everywhere, under any conditions, meeting people who served as guides as well as models, multiplying the drawings that would later allow him to faithfully render on canvas all that was worth observing and transcribing. Huysmans did not hesitate to represent himself in some of his paintings, often with a touch of humor and always with great respect for the local culture.

His paintings mainly represent harem scenes, games and dancers, but also portraits and celebrations. The vivid and brilliant colours, dominated by tones of red, green and ochres, reveal the carefully observed details of the architecture, the costumes and artefacts. Between 1863 and 1891, Huysmans sent 14 small size works to the Glasgow Institute of Arts and two paintings to the Manchester City Gallery. In 1889, he exhibited at the French Artists Salon and the same year at the Universal Exhibition in Paris.

## Museums

Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Art, Maritime Museum.

## Bibliography

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