

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Théodore GERICAULT (1791 - 1824)

A Lion Attacking a Horse

Pencil on papier calque, laid down on card.
128 x 214 mm. (5 x 8 3/8 in.)

The subject of a horse being attacked by a lion was one that held a particular fascination for Géricault, as it had for George Stubbs before him. Géricault would have known of Stubbs's paintings of lions and horses in combat even before his stay in England in 1820-1821, as prints of these subjects were available in France and he copied some of them. Géricault produced several pencil drawings and watercolours of lions attacking horses¹, culminating in one of his most dramatic depictions of the theme; a drawing of *A Horse Attacked by a Lion* in the Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen in Rotterdam. He also produced two lithographs of the subject.

The attribution of the present sheet to Géricault has been confirmed by Lorenz Eitner. A copy of this drawing, attributed to Alexandre Colin, is in a private collection, while a variant of the composition, with the head of the horse not raised, appears in a sheet of pencil studies by Géricault in a private collection.

Provenance:

Douglas Huntly Gordon, Baltimore, Maryland (his collector's mark [Lugt 1130a] stamped on a museum loan label formerly attached to the old backing board)

Loaned by him to the Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland

Anonymous sale ('The Property of a Lady'), New York, Christie's, 24 May 1989, part of lot 335.

Literature:

Germain Bazin, *Théodore Géricault: Étude critique, documents et catalogue raisonné*, Vol.VII, Paris, 1997, p.31 and pp.149-150, no.2343A.

Artist description:

When Théodore Géricault died in January 1824, at the age of thirty-three, he was best known as the painter of *The Raft of the Medusa*, which had caused a sensation when it was exhibited at the Salon of 1819. The public at large knew little or nothing of his work as a draughtsman, however, so when the contents of his studio – containing some 220 paintings and several hundred drawings and sketchbooks - were sold at auction in November 1824, the works on paper were a revelation, and were eagerly acquired by collectors. Several important collections of drawings and watercolours by Géricault were formed in France in the 19th century – by Alfred Armand, Louis Bro, Philippe de Chennevières, Alexandre Colin, L. J. A. Coutan, Horace His de la Salle and François Marcille, among others - and works by the artist have remained popular with collectors and connoisseurs ever since.