

Paul DELAROCHE (Paris 1797 - Paris 1856)

Study of a Bearded Man

Black chalk.
An engraved portrait medallion of Jean-Jacques Barre by Delaroche, dated 1845, stuck down on the backing board.
Inscribed P. Delaroche / David on the backing board.
246 x 204 mm. (9 3/4 x 8 in.)

The present sheet cannot be connected with any surviving painting by Paul Delaroche, although it may compared with similar genre studies that seem to have been made on a visit to Italy between 1834 and 1835. On this trip he drew a number of studies of contemporary Italian peasant types (one such example, comparable to the present sheet, is in the British Museum), and was perhaps thinking of including such figures in the planned mural decoration of the church of La Madeleine in Paris with scenes of the life of Saint Mary Magdalene; a commission that Delaroche, however, eventually declined. The drawing may also be compared in spirit and type with a series of portrait oil sketches of the monks at the monastery and hermitage at Camaldoli in Tuscany, where Delaroche worked for several weeks in 1834.

The portrait engraving by Delaroche on the backing board depicts the engraver and medallist Jean-Jacques Barre (1793-1855). Barre was appointed graveur général at the Monnaie de Paris in 1842 and remained in this position until his death, designing French medals, banknotes and postage stamps. The engraving was used as the basis for a posthumous portrait medallion of Jean-Jacques Barre, engraved by his sons Desiré-Albert and Jean-Auguste Barre and struck in 1855.

Although Delaroche did not engrave any medals himself, he produced a handful of medallion portrait drawings of this type. Related to the present sheet is a medallion drawing by Delaroche of one of Barre's sons, the engraver Desiré-Albert Barre (1818-1878), also signed and dated 1843, in the collection of the Musée de la Monnaie in Paris. (Albert Barre was a pupil of Delaroche, and succeeded his father as general engraver at the Monnaie de Paris.)

Provenance:

Molly Klobe, Chamberlin Gallery, New York.

Artist description:

The son of a minor painter and art dealer, Hippoltye (known as Paul) Delaroche entered the École des Beaux-Arts in 1816, studying first with the landscape painter Louis-Étienne Watelet before eventually joining the atelier of Antoine-Jean, Baron Gros. He made a successful debut at the Salon of 1819, where he exhibited paintings of religious subjects, but by the end of the 1820's had begun depicting subjects from French and English history. Over the next fifteen years, he consolidated his reputation as the foremost history painter in Paris, contributing regularly to the Salon exhibitions and often depicting events from modern, rather than classical history. After 1837, however, he no longer exhibited at the Salons, preferring for the most part to work outside official circles. Much of his later career was taken up with religious painting and portraiture, and with the public commission for the enormous Hemicycle in the auditorium of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts; a vast mural depicting seventy artists from Antiquity to the 18th century which took Delaroche more than four years to complete.

The last years of Delaroche's career were mainly devoted to paintings of religious subjects. Having inherited Gros' studio upon becoming a Professor at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1833, Delaroche enjoyed a reputation as a gifted teacher until his retirement in 1843; among his pupils were Thomas Couture, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Jean-François Millet and Ferdinand Heilbuth.