Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Ferdinand Heilbuth (Hamburg 1826 - Paris 1889)

An Elegant Woman Seated by a River

Watercolour and gouache on blue paper, laid down.
Signed FHeilbuth at the lower left.
256 x 420 mm. (10 1/8 x 16 1/2 in.)

It was during his enforced stay in England at the time of the Franco-Prussian War that Ferdinand Heilbuth developed a fondness for watercolour, which was to occupy much of his later career. An active founder member of the Société des Aquarellistes Français, Heilbuth's work in the medium of watercolour was praised by one author in a contemporary critical appraisal of the artist's work: 'He had executed paintings in watercolor among the first of those who were not solely and specially aquarellists; his first painting in this kind is of the year 1864...In this material he found a scale of fresh and velvety colors which oil-painting does not yield, and fell in love with the method. Thenceforth he strewed abroad, by handfuls, a thousand little subjects, the delightful accidents borrowed from Paris life, from the adventures of the villeggiatura in the environs, that inexhaustible source of pleasurable scenes.'

Provenance:

Possibly the vente Heilbuth, Paris, Galerie Georges Petit, 19-21 May 1890.

Artist description:

The son of a rabbi, Ferdinand Heilbuth lived and studied in Antwerp, Munich, Düsseldorf and Rome before settling in Paris. He entered the studio of Paul Delaroche, remaining there after it was taken over by Charles Gleyre. He made his debut at the Salon in 1853, and his early work consisted of genre pictures and historical paintings, the latter often depicting episodes from the lives of earlier artists. These works, exhibited at the Paris Salons to great popular success, included such paintings as Rubens Introducing Brouwer to his Wife and The Son of Titian. He later abandoned such subjects, however, in favour of paintings inspired by a long stay in Rome, and in particular the inner workings and day-to-day life of the Vatican. Obliged to leave Paris during the Franco-Prussian war, Heilbuth worked in England between 1870 and 1872, painting scenes of such leisurely plein-air pursuits as croquet, lawn tennis and boating on the Thames. He exhibited at the Royal Academy, and among his patrons was Sir Richard Wallace, who purchased four of his paintings which are today in the Wallace Collection in London. Heilbuth returned to Paris in 1874 and became a naturalized French citizen four years later. The year after Heilbuth's death, a sale of the contents of the artist's studio was held in Paris; the auction included nearly 150 paintings and oil sketches, as well as 69 watercolours and 84 drawings.