

Theodore Auguste RIBOT (St. Nicolas d'Attez 1823 - Colombes 1891)

a. Study of the Artist's Left Hand; b. Study of the Artist's Right Hand

a. Pen and black ink.
Signed with the artist's initials tR at the lower centre.
101 x 152 mm. (4 x 6 in.) [sheet]

b. Pen and black ink.
Signed with the artist's initials tR at the lower right.
112 x 155 mm. (4 3/8 x 6 1/8 in.) [sheet]

Théodule Ribot produced a large number of drawings of his hands, which have something of the character of self portraits. As his contemporary biographer, Louis de Fourcaud, wrote of the artist in 1885, 'Long evenings are spent sketching hands in all their possible movements. Because of this persistence, he acquires an incredible skill as a draftsman.' As a modern scholar has further noted, 'Ribot placed great emphasis on hands, recognizing their expressive qualities.' In his paintings, faces and hands are usually more strongly lit than the rest of the composition, and as such acquire a particular significance. In such drawings as this pair of studies, each hand is shown as if holding a pen or chalk.

At an exhibition of Ribot's work held in Colombes in 1934, ten drawings of hands were exhibited, all of which came from the collection of a M. Aizpin. Drawings of hands by Ribot – either studies of single hands, or of several studies of hands on one sheet - have occasionally appeared on the art market, while a drawing of a left hand was at one time in the collection of Henry Scipio Reitlinger.

Artist description:

A leading member of the Realist movement in France, Théodule-Augustin Ribot seems to have had relatively little formal training, although he worked briefly as an assistant to the painter Auguste-Barthelémy Glaize. He began his career as an artisan and gilder, but by the late 1850's had begun to paint still life and kitchen subjects, usually working at night by candlelight. He first exhibited at the Salon in 1861, showing small-scale kitchen scenes and still life subjects that display the particular influence of the work of François Bonvin. His paintings were soon acquired by collectors, and he achieved a measure of success, winning medals at the Salons of 1864 and 1865 and again in 1878. Ribot was one of the founders of the Salon du Champ de Mars, along with Henri Fantin-Latour, James McNeill Whistler and Alphonse Legros, and was also a member of the Société des Aquafortistes. Much of his oeuvre is made up of humble genre scenes and depictions of the working classes of Paris, often using members of his family as models, and inspired by the example of Bonvin and such earlier artists as Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin and the Dutch and Spanish genre painters of the 17th century. Much admired

by his fellow artists, Ribot was presented in 1884 with a medal by a group of his friends (including Fantin-Latour, Claude Monet, Jules Bastien-Lepage and Jean-François Raffaelli) which was inscribed simply ‘A Théodule Ribot, le peintre indépendant’.