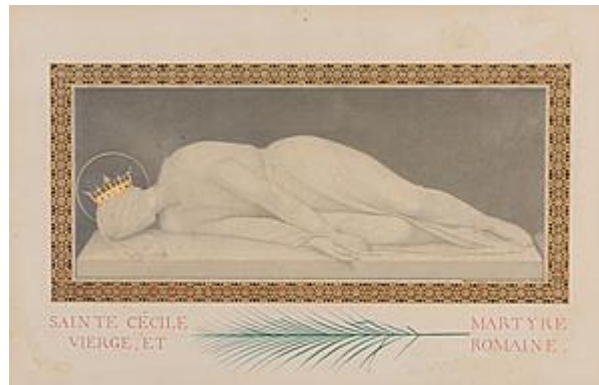


STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Savinien PETIT (Trémilly 1815 - Paris 1878)

The Tomb of Saint Cecilia in Rome

Black chalk and stumping, heightened with touches of gold, within a fictive decorated border in watercolour, on paper laid down on a paper tablet.

Signed SAVINIEN PETIT DELT. in the lower left margin.

Inscribed and dated SAINTE CECILE IN TRASTEVERE. ROME. MARS 1849 (over traces of an earlier inscription in pencil) in the lower right margin.

Further inscribed SAINTE CÉCILE / VIERGE, ET/ MARTYR / ROMAINE. below the image.

153 x 333 mm. (6 x 13 1/8 in.) [image, including fictive mount]

259 x 400 mm. (10 1/4 x 15 3/4 in.) [tablet]

The years that Savinien Petit spent in Italy, between 1845 and 1850, were of fundamental importance to his artistic development. As Pierre Depelchin's posthumous biography, published soon after the artist's death, noted, 'His love of antiquity, his natural taste for religious painting, and, ultimately, his Christian piety, developed and strengthened in him during his five-year stay in Italy. This was the true school in which this pure and profoundly Catholic talent was formed.'

Dated 1849, this striking drawing is a copy of the celebrated marble sculpture of Saint Cecilia by the Roman sculptor Stefano Maderno (c.1576-1636), completed in 1600 for the saint's tomb in the church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere.

Artist description:

A gifted 19th century painter of Christian art, Savinien Petit was largely forgotten not long after his death, and his work has only recently been rediscovered by scholars and art historians. Born in Trémilly (today Nully-Trémilly) in Haute-Marne, he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Dijon in the 1830s, and supported himself by producing lithographs of landscapes and portraits, often as book illustrations.

Around 1838 he won a scholarship to continue his training under Auguste Hesse at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and also worked in the studio of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Petit's earliest surviving painting, a Descent from the Cross, is dated 1839. The following year he showed for the first time at the Salon, with a painting of The Infant Jesus Explaining the Scriptures to His Family, and four years later won a third-class medal at the Salon of 1844. Although he had never competed for the Prix

de Rome, he was sent to Rome on a government stipend in 1845, tasked with making archaeological drawings of the ancient paintings in the catacombs of the city. During a period of five years in Italy, Petit worked at a furious pace, making extensive studies of the catacombs and numerous other works in Rome. He was particularly inspired by the work of Fra Angelico, and was also influenced by the German Nazarene painters working in Italy, such as Johann Friedrich Overbeck, whom Petit is known to have met.

On his return to France in 1850 Petit settled in Paris and continued to exhibit infrequently at the Salons. Although he occasionally produced portraits, he was almost exclusively active as a painter of religious subjects, characterized by a profoundly spiritual manner and a particular purism, for churches, convents and oratories in Paris and throughout France. His most significant commissions included the mural decoration of the chapel of the Château de Broglie in Eure, painted between 1854 and 1865, and paintings for two chapels in the cathedral of Saint-André in Bordeaux, executed between 1860 and 1867. In 1873 Petit became a member of the Société de Saint-Jean, founded the previous year with the aim of promoting the practice of Christian art. Among his last major works were mural decorations in the apse of the church of Saint-Gervais-Saint-Protais in Rouen, painted in 1875, and a Sacred Heart for the Parisian church of Saint-Joseph, commissioned in 1870 but only completed in 1876.

Although Petit had been honoured in 1860 by Pope Pius IX as a knight in the pontifical order of Saint Gregory the Great, by the time of his death he was relatively little known, apart from the fellow members of the Société de Saint-Jean, whose secretary, Pierre Depelchin, published a thorough account of the artist's life in 1878. The contents of Petit's studio were dispersed at auction shortly after his death, and it was not until 1977 that a large cache of his drawings was discovered in an antique shop in Lille. By far the largest extant group of drawings by Petit, numbering over two hundred sheets, is today in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nancy, which mounted an exhibition of the artist's drawings in 2004. Other drawings by Petit are today in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux, the Louvre, and the Prado in Madrid.