

Paul STECK (Troyes 1866 - Paris 1924)

Portrait of the Artist Félicien Rops in his Studio

Pen and brush, with brown and black ink and brown wash, over an underdrawing in pencil, heightened with white.

Framing lines in brown ink.

Signed and dated paul steck. 91. at the upper right.

Further inscribed by the artist Felicien Rops and cordial souvenir / Paul Steck 92 on the former backing sheet.

315 x 250 mm. (12 3/8 x 9 7/8 in.) [image]

338 x 276 mm. (13 1/4 x 10 7/8 in.) [sheet]

The present sheet is a portrait of the Belgian painter, printmaker, draughtsman, and illustrator Félicien Rops (1833-1898) in his studio. Dated 1891 and apparently presented to the sitter the following year, this drawing was used for the cover of the illustrated weekly magazine La Vie populaire published on the 17th of September 1891. The same image was used again a few years later to illustrate a special issue - devoted to Rops - of the literary and artistic review La Plume, which appeared on 15 June 1896.

Paul Steck produced a small number of portrait drawings and prints of fellow artists in the 1890s. A drawing of the painter Henri Gervex (1852-1929) seated at an easel in his studio and dated the same year as the present sheet, was sold at auction in Paris in 2016. Steck also engraved a portrait of the artist Georges Antoine Rochegrosse (1859-1938), standing with a palette and brushes in his hand.

A drawing by the artist Paul Mathey (1844-1929) of Félicien Rops examining a newly printed sheet in his workshop is in a private collection in London. Drawn in 1888, a few years before Steck's portrait, the Mathey drawing was a study for a painting which was reproduced alongside the present sheet in the 15 June 1896 issue of La Plume.

Literature:

La Vie populaire, Paris, 17 September 1891, illustrated on the cover; La Plume: littéraire, artistique et sociale, 15 June 1896, illustrated p.426.

Artist description:

Paul Steck studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris under the Orientalist painter Jean-Léon Gérôme. A painter of landscapes, portraits and scenes from literature and allegory, often with a Symbolist bent, Steck began exhibiting at the Salons in 1890, earning an honourable mention in 1895. The following year he won a third-class medal at the Salon and also became member of the Société des Artistes Français. Among his best-known works is a remarkable painting of Ophelia Drowning of 1895, today in the Musée du Petit Palais in Paris. Steck took part in the fifth Salon de la Rose + Croix, organized by the eccentric Symbolist novelist and critic Joséphin ('Sâr') Péladan, in 1896, and four years later won a bronze medal at the Exposition Universelle of 1900.