



PROANTIC
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Léon Cogniet (1794-1880) Study For The Ceiling Of The Louvre



8 500 EUR

Signature : Léon Cogniet

Period : 19th century

Condition : Parfait état

Material : Oil painting

Length : 65 cm hors cadre

Width : 54 cm hors cadre

Description

Léon COGNIET

(Paris 1794 - Paris 1880)

Study for the figure of the guard in the ceiling of the Louvre:

"The Expedition to Egypt under the orders of Bonaparte"

Sketch in oil on canvas in the middle of the 19th century

H. 65 cm; L. 54 cm

around 1830-1833

Related work: - The Egyptian Expedition under the orders of Bonaparte, ceiling commissioned in 1828 for the Room of the papyri and Greek manuscripts on the first floor of the southern wing of the old Louvre (Campana Gallery).

Dealer

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Our study is preparatory to the bust of the central figure of the guard in the ceiling of the Louvre. Commissioned under Charles X, this ceiling was the subject of hesitation and successive projects. Completed only in 1835, it was not finished when it was presented at the Salon of 1833. We also know that Cogniet was slow and meticulous in his work. Without resorting to allegory, the artist proposed a historical fiction showing Bonaparte surrounded by scholars and artists, witnessing the discovery of a sarcophagus during the Egyptian campaign - which enhanced the scientific role of the France on the occasion of this disastrous epic. The work produced is truly disconcerting and contrasts with the other decorations of the Louvre. Bonaparte, in the shade of a tent, is barely visible. The reception will be mixed: "Vulgar and black characters practice excavations in a ground café au lait: that's all! exclaimed Paul Mantz. The face of our guard is not the least surprising: Cogniet makes of him a sleepy old grumbler, leaning on his rifle. His bicorne, tilting on one side of the skull, adds a comical element to a scene that is not supposed to be. However, the comparison with an overall study of the ceiling, prior to our canvas, proves that Léon Cogniet modified the initial attitude of the guard to deliberately give him this sympathetic and somewhat laughable appearance - a transformation all the more significant as the grognard occupies the center of its composition! The existence of our sketch, executed at almost real size, proves, moreover, that the painter meditated on this figure. The study is brushed vigorously, with a suggestive touch, without encumbering itself with useless elements: the rifle is thus barely indicated and its bayonet is reduced to a blue-silver spot. There is still some Géricault in this sketch where Léon Cogniet shows himself to be much more of a non-conformist than a man of the "golden mean".