



PROANTIC
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Marcellin Desboutin (1823-1902), The Two Lovers, 1859



6 500 EUR

Signature : Marcellin Desboutin

Period : 19th century

Condition : Restauré

Material : Oil painting

Length : 81

Height : 101

Description

Marcellin DESBOUTIN (Cérilly 1832 - Nice 1892)

Two Lovers in Renaissance Times

1859

Oil on canvas, 81 x 101 cm

Monogrammed on the stone: MD / 1859

Gilded wooden frame

The painting depicts a dark-complexioned messenger presenting a letter and a ring to a blonde young woman, who, visibly distressed, turns her gaze away. The background is dominated by lush vegetation, particularly grapevines, which are often associated with abundance and passion.

This poignant moment, where romance and

Dealer

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dramatic action intertwine, reflects Marcellin Desboutsin's fascination with poetic themes of the Italian Renaissance, notably the story of Paolo and Francesca made famous by the Florentine poet Dante Alighieri in Canto V of the *Inferno*. The scene depicted could represent the moment when Paolo delivers a letter and a nuptial ring to Francesca on behalf of his brother Giovanni. Loving only Paolo, Francesca's posture conveys an inner conflict marked by rejection and sorrow.

The work belongs to the artist's Florentine period, during which he lived at the Villa Ombrellino, a grand countryside residence near Florence. The composition, with its meticulous attention to faces, gestures, and the draping of garments, shows classical influence while integrating a romantic sensitivity. The rendering of the sky and the fabrics also aligns the painting with the colorist heritage of Venetian masters such as Veronese and Titian.

Marcellin Desboutsin was born in Cérilly (Allier) on August 26, 1823. A former pupil of Thomas Couture, he dedicated much of his work to Italy and was also recognized as a writer and poet. In the realm of artistic techniques, he was a pioneer of drypoint engraving, earning widespread acclaim for his portraits of notable contemporaries. He received a third-class medal at the Salon of 1879 and a silver medal at the Salon of 1889.

Desboutsin was also a central figure in the Impressionist circle. A friend of Manet and Degas, he participated in the group's second exhibition in 1876. Immortalized by Degas in *L'Absinthe* (also titled *In a Café*, 1875), housed in the Musée d'Orsay, Desboutsin himself embodied the intersection of tradition and modernity. Decorated with the Legion of Honor in 1895, he continued to innovate throughout his career, occasionally signing his works with a distinctive monogram combining "M" and "D," which can be

seen in the lower left corner of this painting.