



**PROANTIC**  
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

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Att. To Jacques Swebach-desfontaines (1769-1823) Arcueil: The Medici Aqueduct Bridge

12 000 EUR



Signature : Att. à Jacques Swebach-Desfontaines

Period : 18th century

Condition : Parfait état

Material : Water color

Length : 21,5 cm à vue

Width : 31 cm à vue

Description
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Attributed to Jacques

**SWEBACH-DESFONTAINES**

(Metz 1769 - Paris 1823)

Arcueil: the Medici aqueduct bridge and the  
Faisanderie

Watercolor on pen strokes

H. 21.5 cm; L. 31 cm

Described "drawn from nature" lower right

Around 1790

Provenance:

- Sale of March 22, 1995, Drouot,

Pescheteau-Badin-Godeau and Leroy, No. 116 of  
the catalog (reproduced), titled Lavoir near an

aqueduct. Hammer sale price (excluding costs):

68,000 Francs (EUR10,367 at constant rate)

- Private collection

Dealer
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This beautiful watercolor offers us a rare view of the Arcueil aqueduct bridge, a few kilometers south of Paris, since looking towards east with the work of art on the left, while the vast majority of existing views are with the bridge on the right. If its luminosity and picturesqueness make it very desirable, its topographical accuracy makes it a true historical document. You can clearly see the dwellings that were built between the arches during the 18th century, when the aqueduct was no longer maintained, as well as the house known as the Faisanderie (with blue shutters). This last building is one of the rare vestiges of the domain of Arcueil which belonged to the Prince of Guise at the beginning of the 18th century and then to the Prince of Beauveau. The path to the right of the bridge which passes in front of the Faisanderie and then climbs to the right (on the heights of Cachan) corresponds to the current rue de la Citadelle. This aqueduct bridge, classified since 1991, was built to cross the Bièvre valley, of which we can see in the watercolor a dead arm, which serves as a washhouse. Built in freestone from the quarries of Arcueil, it is 379 meters long, with a maximum height of nearly 19 meters, resting for the central part on 17 bays, 9 of which are open in arcades (over a length of 209 meters). It is the only visible element of the Medici aqueduct, or Rungis water aqueduct, whose construction was supervised by Marie de Médicis between 1613 and 1623, and whose purpose was to supply water to her Luxembourg Palace and its fountains. The city of Paris appointed Jean Coing as project manager for the aqueduct, but it was the architects of Henri IV and Marie de Médicis, Thomas Francine (of Florentine origin) and Louis Métezeau (1560-1615), who were commissioned to create the actual bridge. Around 1870, the bridge served as the base for another aqueduct overhanging it, that of the Vanne, built by Belgrand, which carried water from Burgundy to Paris, still visible today. After Jean-Baptiste Oudry (who concentrated more on the park and

the castle), the places were represented by several artists at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, in engraving, in watercolor or in painting, the painting the most famous being perhaps that of the Danish master Eckersberg (1783-1853) in 1812. Jean-Victor Bertin represented the arcades of the bridge with tight frames but we also know of him a View of the Faisanderie. In this painting, the Faisanderie has lost its 2nd floor, visible in our watercolor, replaced by a steeper roof. Formerly attributed to Jean-Thomas Thibault (1757-1826), our drawing seems to us rather to correspond to the picturesque and "Nordic" style of Swebach-Desfontaines, who is known for his usual scenes of hunting, battles, bivouacs, military convoys, horse racing..., but who also produced topographical views with architectures (Tuileries, Porte Saint-Denis, Boulevard du Temple, etc...), which have several stylistic similarities with our drawing: treatment of characters and their shadows, of the ground with quite typical little pebbles, a way of drawing the windows. The handwritten mention "drawn from nature" appearing at the bottom right of the drawing can also be quite comparable to Swebach's handwriting.