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Alexandre-marie Colin, Suzanne And The Elderly



850 EUR

Signature : Alexandre Marie Colin (1798-1875)

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Paper

Length : 180 mm

Width : 140 mm

Description

H. 18 ; l.14 cm

Graphite on paper

Signed lower left

Stamped by the artist (L.3078), lower right

Preparatory drawing for a painting of the same subject executed in 1866.

This charming drawing illustrates a biblical episode from the life of Susanna, told in the Book of Daniel (XIII). The scene depicts the young Susanna preparing to take a bath, surrounded by her maids. In the background, in the upper register, are the figures of two old men watching the young girl. Later, the two men will take advantage of the fact that the maids have gone to fetch some oil for her bath to make advances

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towards Suzanne. In retaliation for her refusal, they accused her of adultery and had her condemned to death. She was saved by the prophet Daniel, who cleared her name.

The figure of Susanna occupies the centre of the composition. She is about to descend the stairs to her bath, while a servant helps her to remove her veil. Although she is naked, there is a certain modesty in her gestures, in keeping with the young girl's character as described in the texts. She is flanked on the right by a second maid, who is working on a censer, which spreads its smoke over the background of the scene. At her feet is a lekythos and the outline of a fan.

The scene, which appears to take place under an arcade, is structured by architectural elements: on the right, a column surmounted by a statue, and on the left, another column, partially concealed by a heavy curtain, rises behind the group of women. Higher up, a balcony or balustrade serves as an observation post for the two old men who have come to spy on the young girl.

The artist has sketched some elements in a lively manner, while others, such as the silhouettes of Suzanne and the maid assisting her, are more sharply drawn. The artist seems to have wanted to decide on the final pose he would give to his figures in his final work. This drawing is undoubtedly a study for a painting, now in a private collection, in which Colin would faithfully reproduce the ideas sketched here.

The figure of Susanna recalls the Venuses of the Renaissance, particularly those of Parmigianino or Correggio, and illustrates the artist's familiarity with the work of the Old Masters. He was no stranger to the subject, having already produced at least two copies of *Susanna and the Elders*: Veronese's *Susanna*, now in the Louvre, and Rubens's *Susanna*, now in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid.

There are also more contemporary influences,

particularly in the Orientalist touch borrowed from Théodore Chassériau (1819-1856) and his 1854 painting, Moorish Woman Emerging from the Bath.

Although the work's history is difficult to trace, it is likely to have been listed as one of the odalisques in the drawings section of the catalogue of the artist's sale after his death on 2 February 1876.

Biography of Alexandre-Marie Colin

A prodigal artist of the Romantic school, Alexandre-Marie Colin was only 16 when he entered the studio of Anne Louis Girodet at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He then joined the studio of Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, where he met the great Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863). This studio camaraderie led to a lasting friendship, as well as a mutual artistic influence that sometimes led to their works being confused. The two artists also shared a studio where each made lithographs of the other's paintings.

"His nervous, powerful style was so similar to Delacroix's that some people thought there could be confusion between certain works by the two artists"

His circle of friends also included Richard Parkes Bonington (1802-1828), a painter and figurehead of English Romanticism, and Théodore Géricault. On the occasion of the London exhibition of *Le radeau de la méduse*, he made the engraving for Géricault that was presented to the public.

A prolific painter and engraver, Alexandre Marie Colin was renowned for his portraits of great men and actors in costume, as well as his genre scenes and landscapes. He was also praised for his talent as a copyist: his travels to England, Italy and Spain gave him the opportunity to admire European collections of ancient art and to copy the works of the greatest painters. His

reproductions, which showed his talent for capturing the genius and peculiarities of each artist, were much appreciated by his contemporaries.

Colin exhibited at the Salon from 1819 until the end of his career. He received several prizes, including the 1st class medal in 1840.

He fulfilled numerous commissions for decorative programmes, from historical scenes for the Grand Trianon to paintings for Parisian churches. His works are in the collections of prestigious museums in France and abroad.