Edouard Detaille, The Sparrowhawk, August 7, 1897, Drawing



2 200 EUR

Signature : Edouard DETAILLE (Paris 1848 - 1912)
Period : 19th century
Condition : Bon état
Material : Paper
Length : 41 cm
Height : 26,5 cm

Description

Edouard DETAILLE
(Paris 1848 - 1912)
The Sparrowhawk
7th August 1897
graphite pencil on a letter from the Ministry of Finance to Edouard Detaille
sheet measuring 41 x 26.4 cm folded in two, forming four pages with a letter from the Minister of Finance on page 1, a sketch of pieces of bread on page 2, a drawing of a man with his arm outstretched on page 3 and a writing exercise on page 4
traces of folding on the sheet, very small tears at the folds
annotated by the collector 'Detaille'
dated several times by the artist
unframed

Dealer

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Provenance: Georges Lemaire collection, by descent

Édouard Detaille was an academic artist and illustrator, a pupil of Ernest Meissonier, best known for his military scenes. Renowned for his historical realism and eye for detail, he was particularly famous for his work on uniforms, and was asked by the Ministry of War to design certain outfits. Highly involved in the artistic life of his time, he took an active part in the Salons de peinture, was elected a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1892 and chaired the Société des Artistes Français from 1896 to 1900.

In August 1897, Édouard Detaille scribbled on a letter he had received from the Minister of Finance, Georges Cochery, in his capacity as President of the Société des artistes français. The letter followed Detaille's request to grant a tobacconist's licence to the widow of the sculptor Pierre-Bernard Prouha, a former member of the Société des artistes français. This document bears witness to the political implications of Detaille's position, his social prerogatives and his influence at the highest levels of government.
The inscriptions left on this document are partly distraction, or a form of automatic and repetitive writing. The first is the word 'August' (the current month, written at the top of the letter), written dozens of times around the ministry's text, but also on the back in the form of three-dimensional studies. On the same reverse, the name 'Poincaré' appears several times, the name of two cousins who were already well known in 1897: Henri Poincaré was a mathematician, physicist and philosopher, and a member of the Académie des Sciences, while Raymond Poincaré was a Republican politician, and two years earlier had been Minister of Public Instruction, Fine Arts and Religious Affairs. It is likely that Detaille had worked with him in this capacity, and that he included his name on this ministerial letter by association of ideas. Raymond Poincaré attended

Édouard Detaille's funeral at the head of the cortege at the end of 1912, when he was President of the Council.

Finally, inside the document is the most striking drawing. It depicts a bare-chested man, with a very slender anatomy, somewhat caricatured or surreal, holding out one arm and looking skywards. The neck is long, like the arm. The low forehead, pronounced nose and black hair give the subject a raven-like appearance. This skeletal, somewhat gloomy figure nevertheless conveys a poetic, highly expressive impression. Like the other sheets in the collection, it demonstrates Detaille's talent as a draughtsman, and his reputation as a painter of academic and realistic historical scenes. In contrast, it shows an artist capable of lyrical, strange or dreamlike inspirations, far from the military and patriotic verve for which he was renowned. Is this naked, puny man, with flowing hair and a lost look, not the antithesis of the soldier in uniform?

A few words about the Georges Lemaire collection (Bailly 1853 - 1914 Paris):

A member of the Société des artistes français from 1887, Georges Lemaire soon became a member of the jury.He attended many of the sessions, and his presence is attested to, among other things, by the numerous reports in which he appears alongside the greatest artists of his time.

He soon set about methodically collecting the sketches and sheets of paper left by his colleagues at the end of these sessions.Between 1892 and 1913, he compiled them in his personal collection.

These sheets clearly reflect the artists' urgency to create, produce and represent what they were observing, or perhaps their need to escape during the long sessions they attended.

A collection that is plural in terms of the number of artists it features, it also has several common denominators that help to make it utterly unique. Firstly, there is the temporal and spatial context of production: these drawings were all produced in the context of the meetings of the Société des artistes français. There is also the medium, as most of the sheets collected by Lemaire are of the same workmanship: medium-quality paper, most likely distributed at the beginning of the session. The artists sometimes used other printed materials, such as menus, agendas or the society's financial statements.

The drawings in this collection are extremely varied: small sketches, caricatures, attempts to revive style, sometimes close to automatic writing...

Some of the drawings are signed by the artists themselves, while the others are listed thanks to the collector, who took care to note the names of the artists whose sheets he collected.