



PROANTIC  
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

## Hortense-haudebourn Lescot (1783-1855) - A Man Condemned To Death Exhorted By A Capuchin

12 000 EUR



Signature : Hortense Haudebourn-Lescot

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Length : 40,5 cm

Width : 32,5 cm

### Description

Hortense HAUDEBOURN-LESCOT (Paris, 1784 -Paris, 1845).A condemned man exhorted by a Capuchin as he is about to be executed.1830-1832.Oil on canvas.H: 32.5 ; W : 40.5 cm.Signed lower right: haudebourn Lescot.The large-format version of our work was exhibited at the Salon of 1819. The Condamné exhorté par un capucin au moment de partir pour le supplice by Hortense Haudebourn-Lescot differs from the artist's usual style in its dramatic content. Notwithstanding the judgment of Landon[1], who was very attached to the light, graceful character of 'women's painting', the painting was a critical success.Auguste Jal was particularly impressed, and wrote: 'It is difficult to believe that such a composition comes from a woman's brush; a broad, vigorous brushstroke,

### Dealer

Galerie Magdeleine

Paintings

Mobile : 0648766909

12 rue des Beaux-Arts

Paris 75006

solid colour, beautiful head characters, distinguish it from all those in which Mlle Lescot has lavished grace, the brilliance of her palette, and sometimes a refined coquetry [2]. The King's Household bought the work at the end of the exhibition, thus publicly recognising Haudebourt-Lescot's talent for genre painting. The artist was also awarded a gold medal at the close of the Salon. Less than fifteen years after it was painted, the painting was mentioned in 1832 in a note from Alphonse de Cailleux, secretary of the Royal Museums: "M. Jouselin will send Madame Haudebourt the painting *Un condamné à mort*, which was entrusted to him in 1830, for restoration. This 17th August 1832[3]". After reading the text, we realise that the painting's state of preservation, which was probably very deteriorated, required restoration, which was entrusted to Haudebourt-Lescot in 1830. The fact that the artist to whom the work belongs was asked to restore it is unprecedented. Traditionally, restoration work is carried out long after the artist's death. Here, the early deterioration of *The Condemned* can be explained by the extensive use of Judean bitumen by the artist during the production of the work. Popular in the early years of the French Restoration, this pigment was appreciated on canvas for its magnificent black with brown tints, used as a glaze for shadows or as a thick layer for solid backgrounds. However, from the mid-1820s onwards, artists realised that the pigment did not hold up well over time. Worse still, depending on the quantity used, it was responsible for real disasters in terms of conservation. As it never dries completely, bitumen tends to migrate into the upper layers and can cause cracks that tear the composition. When layered thickly, as was the case for the dark parts of Haudebourt-Lescot's work, it wrinkles and blackens rapidly. The damage caused by the bitumen to the work remains irreversible, despite the restoration by Haudebourt-Lescot. The losses, particularly in the background, are significant in relation to the

original composition, fortunately preserved thanks to a line engraving of the work published by Landon in his *Annales du musée* of 1819[4]. Having seen for herself the premature deterioration of her masterpiece, Haudebourt-Lescot immediately turned her attention to another painting by her hand that had entered the royal collections in 1819: Diane de Poitiers asking François Ier to pardon her father, kept at the Château de Fontainebleau. The painting shows traces of bitumen, although in lesser proportion than The condemned. Unsurprisingly, the work was found to have deteriorated during Haudebourt-Lescot's visit to Fontainebleau in 1832, as evidenced by a letter from the artist to Alphonse de Cailleux: "Mr I have come to ask you two things for which I would be very grateful if you would be so kind as to take care of them. The first would be to give, as soon as possible, orders for my painting of François Ier which is at Fontainebleau to be varnished, this painting having begun to crack for nearly two years, and needing some care. [...] [5]" Doubtless fearing the disappearance of a work by her own hand from the royal collections, Haudebourt-Lescot made a reduction of her François Ier. Although it is lost today, this reduction, approximately 54 centimetres high and 46 centimetres wide, is known to us thanks to its mention in the sale catalogue of the Armand Jacques Fossard collection in 1835[6]. This is therefore quite likely that, like her François Ier, Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot made a reduction of her condemned in order to preserve the memory of her work, which was threatened and, to her pride, kept in the Royal Collections. This autograph reduction could have been executed between 1830 and 1832, the dates between which the artist came into possession of the painting in order to restore it. Another hypothesis would be that it was a later commission from Alphonse de Cailleux, who became deputy director of the Royal Museums, as the following letter might attest: "Sir, My husband has informed me of your

proposal and I hasten to let you know that I will gladly take on the task of making the small painting you mentioned. I await your instructions on the subject, and look forward to the opportunity to thank you." [7]With the exception of the addition of a mast to which the chains of the supplicant are attached, the artist's composition of 1819 has been reproduced, line for line. This time, however, she avoided using the famous bitumen in the darker areas of the painting, opting instead for a very velvety brown, almost black, no doubt reminiscent of the original colour. Our work is therefore the only surviving example of an important milestone in Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot's career, as the version now in the Louvre has become very difficult, if not impossible, to read.[1] Charles-Paul Landon, *Annales du musée*, Paris, Pillet, 1819, p. 73.[2] Auguste Jal, *L'Ombre de Diderot*, Paris, Coréard, 1819, pp. 177-178.[3] Handwritten note from Alphonse de Cailleux to the administration of the Royal Museums - 17 August 1832. L.a.s., 1 p. Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, A.M.N., series P30, 'Haudebourt-Lescot' file.[4] Charles-Paul Landon, *Annales du musée*, Paris, Pillet, T. II, 1819, p. 72, plate 49.[5] Handwritten letter from Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot to Alphonse de Cailleux - 1834. L.a.s., 2 pp. Address. Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, A.M.N., O/4/2864.[6] Collection Armand Jacques Fossard; his sale, Paris, Hôtel des Commissaires-Priseurs, place de la Bourse (Bonnetons-Delavialle), 22 April 1835, no. 33: "François Ier et Diane de Poitiers. Diane, at the knees of the famous monarch, begs him for the pardon of her father, Jean de Poitiers, Count of Saint-Vallier, condemned to death for having encouraged the escape of the Constable of Bourbon. Touched by the tears of the suppliant, struck by her attractions, Francis I relieves her with affability and pardons the guilty man. Two ladies of the court are on the king's right. The scene takes place in a room outside of which two other figures can be seen on a stoop / Mme Haudebourt took care of this painting / T., h. 20

p., l. 17 p.", 800 francs.[7] Handwritten letter from Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot to Alphonse de Cailleux - 1838. L.a.s., 2 pp. Address. Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, A.M.N., series P30, 'Haudebourt-Lescot' file. Illustrations : Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot; Un condamné exhorté par un capucin au moment de partir pour le supplice; circa 1819; oil on canvas; H: 56, L: 70 cm; Paris, Musée du Louvre (Inv. 5287). After Haudebourt-Lescot, Line engraving by Charles Normand. Hortense Haudebourt-Lescot; Diane de Poitiers asking François I for a pardon for her father; 1819; oil on canvas; H: 210, L: 112 cm; Fontainebleau, Musée National du Château (Inv. 5282).