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Jean Antoine Duclaux (1783-1868) échelles Grotto - The First Passage Of The Italian Stagecoach

18 000 EUR



Signature : Jean Antoine DUCLAUX (1783, Lyon - 1868, Lyon)

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Diameter : 46

Height : 62

Description

Oil on canvas. 46 x 62 cm. Signed lower right.

This oil on canvas by Jean Antoine Duclaux captures a pivotal moment in Alpine transport history: the first crossing of the Italy stagecoach, organized by Franklin Bonafous in 1801, through the old Échelles grotto on the road between Lyon and Turin. The painting's dramatic composition is dominated by a towering rock massif that looms over the scene, lending it both grandeur and tension. In the foreground, a black stagecoach--drawn by several horses and reinforced by two oxen--struggles through the narrow, rugged pass, a testament to the difficulties of this mountainous route. Behind the coach, a man carries a wheel chock, ready to stop the coach immediately in case of a mishap or sudden backward slide. Duclaux, a Lyonnais

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painter renowned for his animal drawing, excels here in his depiction of the equids: their poses and anatomy are observed with acute precision. His mastery of chiaroscuro heightens the contrast between the imposing rocks and the bright sky. The inclusion of figures--some appearing as beggars--adds a social dimension, documenting a moment when Alpine travel opened new opportunities and hardships alike. The perspective recedes into a sunlit mountain landscape, creating a striking sense of depth. This work exemplifies Duclaux's ability to blend documentary accuracy with picturesque sensibility, hallmarks of the early 19th-century Lyon School.

References:

- o Cover illustration of Antoine-Jean Duclaux. *Peintre, Dessinateur et Graveur Lyonnais. 1783-1868* by Evelyne Pansu and Françoise Dupuis-Testenoire.
- o A lithograph after this painting by Charles-Louis Constant is held at the Musée Savoisien (Chambéry).

Jean Antoine Duclaux was born on June 26, 1783, in Lyon and died on May 21, 1868, in the same city. A painter, draftsman, and engraver, he favored genre scenes, landscapes, and animal studies. Duclaux studied drawing in Lyon under Grognard. Initially employed in commerce, he traveled to Naples in 1805 or 1806 as secretary to General Compère, making numerous sketches in Italy. Upon his return to Lyon, he worked from nature under the guidance of Revoil and Fleury-Richard. He first exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1812 and was awarded a first-class medal in 1817. While his early style was somewhat dark and his palette cool and gray, his technique later softened; Ingres praised him as "the finest of all animal draughtsmen." This acclaim applies not only to his animal engravings but also to his landscapes, including *La diligence*, *Intérieur de manège*, *La diligence postale*, *Portrait d'une église gothique*, and *Intérieur d'écurie*.