



## Alexandre Claude Louis Lavalley (1862-1927) Allegory Of The Sea Art Nouveau Symbolist Portrait



4 500 EUR

Signature : Alexandre Claude Louis LAVALLEY

Period : 20th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Length : 46

Height : 55

### Description

This work is a refined testament to the transition between academic classicism and the effervescence of Symbolism. Lavalley does not merely paint a portrait; he idealizes his model, transforming her into a mythological figure. The blonde hair, rendered with remarkable freedom of brushwork, is adorned with shells and marine grasses--an organic, sinuous aesthetic characteristic of Art Nouveau. The painting evokes the mystery of sea nymphs, in which the woman becomes the very incarnation of the natural elements. Everything in this composition celebrates the marine element. The gaze lost toward the horizon, the diaphanous complexion reflecting the humidity of the air, and the attributes (shells, reeds) make this "Study Head" a true allegory of the sea. The contrast between the

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warm tones of the face and the ethereal blue of the background creates a dreamlike atmosphere, almost suspended in time.Dated 1905 on the reverse, this canvas belongs to the period when Lavalley settled in Genêts, facing Mont Saint-Michel. Far from Parisian studios, he discovered a unique light that transformed his palette. This work captures the essence of Normandy: its dunes, wild grasses, and that distinctive clarity that fascinated so many Belle Époque artists.While Alexandre Lavalley is widely recognized for his large institutional decorations and portraits of Parisian high society, his allegorical and Symbolist works are far rarer and highly sought after.Unlike his official commissions, this canvas bears witness to complete creative freedom. It is a moment of "pure painting," in which the artist uses his immense technical mastery to serve a dreamlike vision. This painting does not merely depict a woman; it captures the spirit of an era that sought beauty in the fusion between humanity and untamed nature.The work is in good condition and in its original state (it has never been restored). A few visible losses due to a former framing should be noted.It is presented in an imposing period gilt-wood frame decorated with acanthus leaves; the frame requires restoration.This oil on canvas is signed at the lower right. An old partial exhibition label (.05) is present.Dated 1905 on the reverse. Presence of a historical exhibition label identifying the work as lot no. 305 ("Study Head"). At the time, Symbolist works of this type were often grouped under understated titles ("Study") to leave the viewer free to interpret the allegory.The label recalls the artist's exceptional pedigree: Grand Prix de Rome, pupil of Bouguereau and Cabanel.Canvas dimensions: 55 × 46 cmFrame dimensions: 66 × 57 cmAlexandre Claude Louis LAVALLEY (1862-1927)Born in Paris in 1862, Alexandre Lavalley embodies the pinnacle of the French school of the late 19th century. He entered the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he

studied under the most illustrious masters of academic painting: Alexandre Cabanel, Henri Lehmann, and above all William Bouguereau. From them he inherited an absolute mastery of drawing and a refined science of portraiture that would become his hallmark. His career took on national stature in 1891 when he won the prestigious Premier Grand Prix de Rome for his composition *The Prodigal Son*. This success opened the doors of the Villa Medici, where he spent four years. During this Italian period, he absorbed Mediterranean light and perfected his art of allegorical figure painting--a theme that would remain central to his work. Upon returning to Paris, Lavalley became one of the most sought-after decorative painters of the Belle Époque. He contributed to monumental projects such as the decorations of the Sorbonne, Paris City Hall, and the Gare d'Orsay (now the Musée d'Orsay). Alongside these official commissions, however, Lavalley cultivated a more personal vein. Around the turn of the century, he regularly settled in Genêts, Normandy. In this wild setting, facing the Bay of Mont Saint-Michel, he developed a freer style. He left behind the rigidity of the studio to explore Symbolism and Art Nouveau, painting ethereal figures and allegories bathed in maritime light, as evidenced by this 1905 canvas. A member of the Société des Artistes Français, he exhibited regularly at the Salon, where he received numerous medals (1890, 1897). Museums: His works are now held in prestigious institutions such as the Musée d'Orsay, the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, and within major public decorations in Paris. We are actively seeking Art Nouveau and Symbolist paintings. Please feel free to contact us with any proposals or inquiries. Photographs taken in natural light. Careful packaging. Shipping costs are the responsibility of the buyer. I remain at your disposal for any further information or additional photographs.