



PROANTIC
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

Oil On Panel, Xanthus Smith (united States, 1839-1929), Alpine Landscape, Switzerland

2 800 EUR



Signature : Xanthus Smith

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting on wood

Width : 55 cm

Height : 35 cm

Description

Xanthus Russell Smith (United States, 1839-1929) Chalets at Zwing Uri, Valley of the Reuss, Switzerland (1882) Oil on wood panel, mahogany or American walnut. Signed lower right "Xanthus Smith" and extensively annotated on the reverse. Exhibited at the celebrated American Exhibition in London in 1887. Handwritten inscriptions on the reverse of the panel, in brown ink: "Chalets at Zwing Uri, Valley of the Reuss, Switzerland. Painted by Xanthus Smith 1882. From sketches made by myself & my mother in 1852." Famed for his spectacular naval scenes of the American Civil War, Xanthus Smith offers here a rare and intimate work. As the moving handwritten inscription on the reverse indicates, this Swiss landscape was painted in 1882 from sketches the

Dealer

Résonances d'Histoire

Antiques & Arts

Mobile : 0652439782

Aix-les-Bains 73100

artist had made 30 years earlier, in 1852 (when he was only 13 years old), during a trip to Europe with his mother, the painter Mary Russell Smith. This painting was selected to represent American art at the celebrated American Exhibition in London in 1887, as attested by the original exhibition label still present on the back of the work. Animated Alpine landscape located in the canton of Uri. The foreground consists of a rural scene along a dirt road: peasants at work in traditional dress, a hay cart drawn by a team of two oxen, a sheepdog, and a flock of sheep. The background is structured by local vernacular architecture, with a large wooden chalet featuring balconies and a stone foundation, framed by tall leafy trees. On the horizon, a stone arch bridge spans the watercourse; a mountain massif fades into atmospheric perspective, dominated by the snow-capped Bristen mountain. (Somewhat unrealistic, as it was reconstructed from sketches that were 30 years old.) Detailed and meticulous execution. Smooth pictorial handling in the skies, with textural effects and light impasto in the foliage, rocks, and figures. Rich chromatic palette, with a cloudy sky in pink and bluish tones typical of late-day atmospheres. On the reverse is a pasted kraft-paper exhibition label, printed and completed in ink: "For American Exhibition, London, 1887. Title: Chalets at Zwing Uri, Valley of the Reuss, Switzerland. Artist: Xanthus Smith. 1020 Chestnut St. Philadelphia Pa." There are also white chalk inventory markings on the reverse. The paint layer is in perfect condition. The inner slip shows some craquelure; restoration to the slip is visible at lower left (a small loss has been filled and overpainted). The gilding of the frame is very well preserved. Gilt wood and stucco frame. Moldings and outer frieze carved with stylized floral motifs. The inner slip is veneered in a precious burl wood (such as thuya burl or amboyna burl). Frame dimensions: o Width: 78 cm o Height: 58 cm Visible dimensions: o Width: 55 cm o Height: 35 cm Provenance: o American Exhibition, London,

1887 (original exhibition label on the reverse).o
Probably acquired following this event and kept
in the United Kingdom ever since.o Private
collection of a British family established in
France.Biography:Xanthus Russell Smith
(1839-1929) was an American marine painter,
born and died in Pennsylvania. Coming from a
family of artists (his parents, William Thompson
Russell Smith and Mary Priscilla Wilson, were
both painters), he was first trained in drawing by
his mother.After a trip to Europe with his family,
he studied chemistry at the University of
Pennsylvania, then enrolled at the prestigious
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. During
the Civil War, he served in the Union Navy.
Although he saw little direct combat, he used his
post as a ship's clerk to draw hundreds of ships
(in pencil and oil). After the war, he settled on the
family property, "Edgehill," near Philadelphia,
where he raised a family. He maintained a studio
in the heart of Philadelphia for more than thirty
years and continued painting until his death at the
age of 90.The "Grand Tour" of Europe
(1851-1852):Between 1851 and 1852, when
Xanthus Russell Smith was only 12 or 13 years
old, his parents took the whole family on a grand
study tour of Europe. Their well-documented
itinerary included England, Scotland, Wales,
France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Switzerland.
During this European stay, the entire family spent
its time visiting museums, but above all drawing
and painting the landscapes they encountered.
Young Xanthus, who was already showing
precocious talent, drew extensively during this
trip (indeed, a highly meticulous sketch of the
Roman Forum that he made and dated April
1852, at the age of 13, was recently rediscovered
and sold at auction).Smith is chiefly renowned for
his marine paintings depicting the naval battles of
the American Civil War. Concerned with
historical accuracy, he consulted direct witnesses
to ensure the correctness of his canvases, since he
did not personally take part in the
engagements.Notable works:The Monitor and the

Merrimack (1869) was his first major critical success. He sometimes painted monumental canvases, such as *Final Assault upon Fort Fisher* (1872-1873), which measures more than 3 meters in width. He is especially famous for having painted seven unique versions (between 1865 and 1922) of the celebrated naval battle of June 19, 1864, between the USS *Kearsarge* and the Confederate ship *Alabama*. In addition to his paintings, his sketches were used to illustrate many historical works on the Civil War. Museums holding his works: The works of Xanthus Russell Smith are housed in some of the most prestigious American institutions. His paintings can notably be found at: o The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met), New York o Museum of Fine Arts, Boston o Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia o U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis) and the U.S. Naval Historical Center (Washington, D.C.) o Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, New York (which owns a canvas commissioned in 1922 by F.D. Roosevelt himself, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy) o As well as in other prominent institutions such as the Delaware Art Museum, the Columbus Museum of Art, the Birmingham Museum of Art, and the Union League of Philadelphia

Bibliography: o Torchia, Robert Wilson. *Xanthus Smith and the Civil War* (Exhibition catalogue, Schwarz Gallery, Philadelphia, 1999). o Torchia, Robert Wilson. *The Smiths* (Catalogue, Schwarz Gallery, Philadelphia, 1999). o Fisher, James Louis. *Xanthus Smith: Civil War Painter* (Master's thesis, University of Delaware, 1982). o McNew, Barbara. "The Fury and Terrible Beauty," published in *Naval History* (Vol. 14.3, 2001). o As an aside, Xanthus Smith was also an author: in 1926 he wrote the biography of his former commander, Admiral Samuel Francis du Pont. His autobiography, *An Unvarnished Tale*, is moreover carefully preserved in the archives of the Smithsonian Institution.

Safe and secure shipping: o France: EUR 80 o Europe (Schengen

area): EUR 280o International: EUR 450 o Does
this item pique your interest or curiosity? Feel
free to contact us, we would be delighted to
discuss it with you. We are available from
Monday to Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., at
+33 652 43 97 82We are fluent in English and
have been shipping a wide variety of items
internationally for many years. Please feel free to
contact us with any questions you may have.
Excellent customer service, we accept returns up
to 14 days, 100% positive customer reviews. Visit
our store to check all our amazing products