



Photograph Of Princess Mathilde Bonaparte



5 900 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Paper

Width : 250mm

Height : 320mm

Description

Large and rare albumen photograph of Princess Mathilde Bonaparte 320 mm x 250 mm Mathilde-Létizia Wilhelmine Bonaparte, a French princess known as "Princess Mathilde," was born in Trieste, Italy, on May 27, 1820, and died in Paris on January 2, 1904. The subject is depicted in profile, looking to the left, her chin resting on her hand--a classical convention of the "tableau vivant," inspired by classical sculpture and history painting, which was in vogue in the 1860s and 1870s. The loose, draped white garment is a period costume rather than contemporary attire, reinforcing the allegorical genre or "characters and costumes" genre then in vogue in elite and court photography (the Countess of Castiglione's sessions with Pierson are the best-known example, but this type of work

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was widely imitated). The daughter of King Jerome of Westphalia (Napoleon I's youngest brother) and sister of Prince Napoleon, Princess Mathilde was initially betrothed by her cousin Louis-Napoleon, the future Napoleon III; but this plan fell through, and she married a Russian prince, Anatole Demido, from whom she separated four years later. When Napoleon III began his career, she became involved and assisted him, acting in a sense as his governess. After the Emperor's marriage, she lived outside the Tuileries Palace and led a free life in Paris or Saint-Gratien, as she pleased. A supporter of Russia and Italian unification, she represented--like her brother, though with greater restraint--the left wing of the Empire. In reality, her role was different: she protected writers, regardless of their political views; Flaubert, Gautier, Sainte-Beuve, the Goncourt brothers, and Taine were regulars at her salons. She exhibited watercolors and paintings that lacked much originality. After September 4, 1870, and the fall of the Empire, she took refuge for a time in Belgium but ended her long life in France. She broke free from social conventions and abandoned her religious beliefs, but always remained attached to imperial glory, to the point that she could not accept Taine's criticism of Napoleon I. History will remember her as a patron--most often an enlightened one--who aided Pasteur, protected Gounod, encouraged Nadar, commissioned a triumphal bust from Carpeaux, and gathered eminent writers around her. She alone could attest that the imperial regime was less indifferent to literature and art than is too often claimed.