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Arab Horses In Desert - John Alexander Harrington Bird (1846-1936)

19 200 EUR



Signature : John Alexander Harrington Bird (1846-1936)

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Water color

Width : 75cm

Height : 60cm

Description

For thousands of years, the Bedouin tribes carefully bred Arabian horses as war mounts. Desert conditions had helped forge a breed of horse with substantial lung capacity, unmatched speed, and unwavering endurance. The care with which these horses were bred, ensuring that the bloodline was as pure as possible, and the well-adapted features of these horses meant that they were prized possessions of the Bedouin. These unique horses soon became attractive to Western travellers, who imported them to Europe - in England, in particular, the horse was used to create the Thoroughbred. In the West, the Arabian horse was seen as a symbol of power and freedom, and artists utilised these associations when painting equine portraits of the Arabian breed. In this work, Harrington Bird depicts the

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horse herd without any tack, as if they are untamed. He has magnificently rendered their physicality, with their high tails, narrow ears and haughty faces. Their attentive gazes towards the viewer read as cautious, and as if they are protecting the two young foals. To accentuate the 'oriental' nature of the scene, Harrington Bird has placed the horses beside a desert oasis as a fiery sunset casts the sky in tones of orange and pale blue. The desert background is devoid of any structures or signs of human habitation, further accentuating the wild, untameable, and noble nature of these magnificent creatures.

John Alexander Harrington Bird

Born in 1846, John Alexander Harrington Bird initially embarked upon a career in the military. His passion for art overruled this, and Harrington Bird began to study at the Royal Academy Schools, debuting at the Royal Academy in 1870 and later exhibiting at the Royal Society of British Artists. He quickly earned a reputation as an illustrator of prize studs and racehorses. Indeed, horse racing and equestrianism was in what has been retrospectively deemed as a golden age. With cavalry warfare still at the forefront of combat, and polo becoming an increasingly popular hobby, equine portraits were very much in fashion. In 1875, he spent a decade in the new British territory of Canada, exhibiting his equestrian works at the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. Upon his return to London in 1885, Harrington Bird began to paint Orientalist-style works depicting the prestigious Arabian breed of horse in compositions that emphasised their power and physicality. His works were immensely popular amongst wealthy patrons and polo-players. Harrington Bird passed away in 1936.