



Merry-joseph Blondel (1781-1853) Portrait Of The Architect Charles Percier In 1838



22 000 EUR

Signature : Merry-Joseph Blondel

Period : 19th century

Condition : Parfait état

Material : Oil painting

Length : 61,5 cm hors cadre

Width : 51 cm hors cadre

Description

Merry-Joseph BLONDEL(Paris, 1781 - Paris, 1853)Portrait of Charles Percier in his later yearsOil on canvasH. 61.5 cm ;W.51 cmSigned and dated lower right1838Exhibition : 1839 Salon, no. 190, titled Portrait of the late Ch. Percier, architect, member of the Institut, etc.Related works:-Painting, 64 x 53 cm, commissioned in 1840 by Louis-Philippe from Blondel,and preserved ever sinceat the Palace of Versailles-Painting, 30 x 20 cm, in the collection ofAlexandrine Halévy (daughter of the architectHippolyte Le Bas)-Painting, 32 x 24 cm, dated 1839, in the collection of AchilleLeclere, a student of Percier, and remainedin his family until recently-Engraving by Polydore Pauquet (1800-1879), published in 1840 in theHistorical Galleriesof Versailles-Sketch for the portrait, no.

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49 in the posthumous auction catalog, location unknown. Provenance : heirs of Pierre-François Léonard Fontaine to the present day. Charles Percier (Paris, 1764-Paris, 1838) needs no introduction; he was perhaps the greatest neoclassical architect and interior designer of the late 18th century and the first third of the 19th century, and known for being, along with his colleague and friend Pierre-François Léonard Fontaine (1762-1853), the inventor and leading exponent of the Empire style. Blondel was closely connected to architectural circles; in 1811, in Rome, he painted the portrait of Hippolyte Le Bas, himself a student of Percier, and probably that of Achille Leclerc as well. The second Exhibition of Portraits of the Century, held at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1885, featured this portrait of Le Bas and another of Percier, both of which belonged to Alexandrine Halévy, Le Bas's daughter. He also exhibited at the Salon of 1824 a Portrait of M****, architect (most likely that of Jean-Baptiste Lepère, painted in 1823) and that of Hurlault (both of these paintings are now in the Louvre), followed in 1843 by that of Alphonse de Gisors. Fontaine (of whom he drew a portrait included in the postmortem sale of Blondel's estate) would also serve as a witness at his wedding in 1832 to the daughter of the painter Pierre Maximilien Delafontaine. This close relationship can likely be explained first by the fact that Blondel's older brother, Charles-François-Armand (1770-1854), was himself an architect. Second, by the nature of his work as part of his commissions for set designs, Blondel came to work alongside architects on various construction sites, such as those at the Louvre and Fontainebleau, which were overseen by Fontaine and Percier in the early 1820s; it was during this period that the first connections between Blondel and Percier certainly date back. Now friends, they would also have the opportunity to meet frequently at the Académie des Beaux-Arts and on competition

juries. Listed in the Salon catalog as "painted from memory," (he died on September 5, 1838, which implies that our painting was created during the last quarter of that year), Percier appears here with a pensive and melancholic expression, wearing the clothes of his youth. But Blondel does not fail to clearly depict the pierced earlobe, thus reminding us that Percier (true to his name) was one of the first "celebrities" to embrace piercing! Very fashionable among men during the Renaissance, and particularly in England (see King Charles I's pearl earring), wearing an earring came back into fashion in France under the Directory and spread rapidly during the First Empire, especially in the army. But this aesthetic was also found in artistic circles in Rome at the end of the 18th century, symbolizing a certain freedom or nonconformity; it was during his stay in Rome before the Revolution that Percier adopted this practice, which he continued after his return to Paris, for nearly his entire life, as attested by several written accounts. This ring is clearly visible in a painting by Robert Lefèvre dated 1807.