

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

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FRANÇOIS-MARIUS GRANET

1775 Aix-en-Provence – Malvalat, nr. Aix 1849

An Incantation Ceremony

Pen and brown ink with sepia wash, on laid paper,
laid down on an old album page.

Bearing a sign on the lower right corner.

113 x 96 mm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Germany

François-Marius Granet trained in the studio of Jean-Antoine Constantin. From his youth he was recognized as a gifted draughtsman. After studying briefly in the studio of Jacques-Louis David in Paris – where his simple brown attire and ascetic personality led his fellow pupils to give him the nickname ‘the Monk’ – he resolved to return to the south. Before his departure, however, he submitted a painting to the Salon of 1799 – a depiction of the cloister of a church on the rue St. Honoré. Greatly admired at the exhibition, this painting marked the beginning of Granet’s successful career.

In 1802 Granet travelled to Rome, where he would remain for most of the next twenty-two years. He set up his studio in an abandoned monastery and worked extensively/intensively?? in the city and the surrounding Campagna. Although never a *pensionnaire* at the Académie de France, he was able to make a reasonable living selling views of Rome to the many French tourists who visited the city during the Napoleonic occupation. At the Salon of 1819 he exhibited a painting titled *Le Chœur de l’église des capucins à Rome* (1814-15). Enthusiastically received by critics, the work firmly established his reputation in France. The painting was coveted by Louis XVIII, although eventually purchased by the Emperor’s sister Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples.

Returning to France in 1824, Granet was appointed to a position as a curator at the Louvre in 1826. Later he was given the task of establishing a Museum of French History at Versailles by Louis-Philippe. From then on, he appears to have been less active as a painter, although he continued to draw, and his stay in Versailles saw him produce a series of charming watercolours of the gardens. After his death, some two hundred of his drawings and watercolours were presented to the Louvre. The works remaining in his studio, numbering around three hundred paintings and some 1,500 drawings, were left to his native city of Aix; a bequest that forms the nucleus of today’s Musée Granet.

The present magnificent drawing was most probably executed shortly after Granet’s return from his long stay in Italy in 1824. Stylistically, it may be compared to *La Mort vient éteindre la lampe de Girodet pendant qu’il peint la nuit* executed ca. 1824 [Fig. 1].¹ In combining rapid strokes of the pen with broad brushwork, Granet achieved contrasting light effects, incorporating the white of the untouched

¹ 122 x 178 mm. Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence. See Sébastien Allard and Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, *Le Suicide de Gros*, Paris 2010, p. 19.

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paper for additional dramatic effect. The result is this daemonic, eerie scene which may have been a product of his imagination, or a document for his own participation in an incantation ceremony. The sign in the lower right corner of the sheet recalls the seal of Gadriel, one of the twelve 'Dukes' of the demon Amenadiel, as represented in a sheet of a nineteenth-century book of incantations.²



Fig. 1: *La Mort vient éteindre la lampe de Girodet pendant qu'il peint la nuit*, pen and brown ink, brown washes, 122 x 178 mm. Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence

² *Book of incantations, &c.*, here 1814-31, f. 7v., The National Library of Wales, NLW MS 11117B. The book is described as 'a holograph book of incantations, astrological signs and calculations, ...' bound in a manuscript volume from the library of the Welsh astrologer and medical practitioner John Harries (d. 1839) containing numerous illustrated spells. See <https://viewer.library.wales/4631466#:c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=16&xywh=-383%2C-57%2C4011%2C3868&r=90> (accessed 19 July 2019). - Gadriel (Gadreel?, Gael) is mentioned in an ancient Jewish apocalyptic text, the *Book of Enoch*, describing the origins of demons and giants. See < <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gadreel> > (accessed 19 July 2019).