

LE CLAIRE

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KUNST



FRANÇOIS-AUGUSTE BONHEUR

1824 Bordeaux - Bellevue 1884

Vue de la Vallée de la Jordanne et du Puy Griou, Auvergne

Oil on paper, laid down on canvas. Signed in the lower left: *A Bonheur*, and inscribed on a paper etiquette in the lower left: *Vallée de la Jordanne Puy Griou*.

16,5 x 42,0 cm

PROVENANCE: Studio of the artist, Magny-les-Hameaux, near Versailles – W. M. Brady & Co., New York (1993)¹ – Private collection, Germany

Born into a family of artists, his sister Rosa (1822-1899) having been the most famous, Auguste Bonheur was a pupil of their father, the landscape painter Raymond Bonheur. Like his sister, he was a painter of *animalier* subjects and exhibited regularly at the Salon from 1845 until 1868. In fact all four Bonheur children became artists. Isidore was a sculptor, and Juliette became a painter.

In 1853 Auguste and Rosa, Isidore and Juliette all had works on view at the Salon. Louis Auvray, in his review of the 1859 Salon, commented, *M. Auguste Bonheur, le frère de Rosa Bonheur, est un peintre qui réussit avec talent les animaux et le paysage. Sa couleur est solide et brillante tout à la fois; son pinceau est plus ferme, plus hardi que celui de sa sœur.*² Auguste Bonheur's *Ruins at the Castle of Apchon, Auvergne* was bought by the Emperor Napoleon III's half-brother, the Duc de Morny, the most avid collector of the Second Empire. The artist equally enjoyed an extensive clientele abroad which included Queen Victoria and, in America, the Stewarts and the Vanderbilts.

Bonheur preferred rocky and mountainous sites and traveled France working en plein air in the forest of Fontainebleau as well as the rougher terrain of the Cantal (Auvergne), and the Pyrénées regions. Later in life he painted several splendid seascapes in the region of Calvados on the English Channel. The site, depicted on our painting is clearly identified by the inscription of the paper label as the valley of the river Jordanne, with the Puy Griou, a peak of the Cantal mountains in the Auvergne, a landscape, which the artist often visited.

The present oil sketch belongs to a large group of works recently discovered in the artist's studio at Magny-les-Hameaux, just outside Versailles. In these studies the great tradition of the *plein-air* sketch is given its essential expression.

¹ Seven of these sketches had been exhibited at W. M. Brady & Co., New York, *19th Century Drawings & Oil Sketches*, exhib. cat., May 12 to May 27, 1993, nos. 27-33.

² Cited after *The Thaw Collection, Master Drawings and Oil Sketches, Acquisitions since 1994*, exhib. cat., The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, 27 September - 19 January 2003, p. 238, no. 111.