

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM
FINE ARTS

GUSTAVE MOREAU

Paris 1826 - id.1898
French school

HERCULES AND THE STYMPHALIAN BIRDS

Oil on panel

H. 0,18 m; W. 0, 29 m

Signed lower right: *Gustave Moreau*

Inscribed on back by Gustave Moreau with black ink: *Gustave Moreau, Hercule au lac Stymphale. Vente Anastasi. Don*

DATE: ca. 1872

PROVENANCE:

Paris, Hôtel Drouot, sale 'Tableaux offerts par tous les artistes à M. Anastasi, leur confrère frappé de cécité', 5-6 February 1872, lot 87

LITERATURE:

Pierre-Louis Mathieu, *Gustave Moreau, sa vie, son oeuvre. Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre achevé*, Fribourg, 1976, no.132.

Pierre-Louis Mathieu, *Gustave Moreau, monographie et nouveau catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre achevé*, Paris, 1998, no.444.

RELATED WORKS:



Gustave Moreau, *Charcoal study for Hercules and the Stymphalian birds*, Paris, Musée Gustave Moreau (Des. 3870).

The son of an architect who teaches him classical culture, Gustave Moreau entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1846. But the real master he chose for himself was Théodore Chassériau with whom he became a great admirer and a closely friend. During the 1890s, Moreau succeeded Elie Delaunay as teacher at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts where he would have a great influence on modern painting. Many artists as Georges Rouault, Henri Matisse, Albert Marquet, Henri Charles Manguin and Edgar Maxence have been his students.

Moreau was always interested in the labours of Hercules. His first painting on this subject was painted in 1853. He painted *Hercule au lac Stymphale* in 1871/1872. The work

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represents the hero dressed in a lion's skin, a bow in his hands, facing wild birds. Moreau shows the sixth of the twelve labours of Hercules which was to kill the Stymphalian birds. Hercules could not hunt these monstrous carnivorous birds with beaks and feathers of bronze as sharp as a razor. He was saved by Athena who gave him rattlesnakes of bronze made by Hephaestus. Making the snakes resonate, the birds flew away and he could kill them with his arrows.

Another work on the same subject belongs to the collection of the Musée des Beaux Arts in Dijon: this is a watercolour made in 1872. Until 1875, Moreau works with other labours of Hercules such as *Hercule au jardin d'Hespérides* (cat. Musée Gustave Moreau no. 80), or *Hercule et la biche aux pieds d'airain* (cat. Musée Gustave Moreau no. 206).

As indicated by the inscription written by Moreau on the back of the painting, he gave this work for a sale organized by artists for the benefit of the painter Auguste Paul Charles Anastasi (1820-1889) who became blind.