

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM  
FINE ARTS

**CLAUDE JOSEPH VERNET**

Avignon 1714 - Paris 1789

French school

**THE LAUNCH OF A WARSHIP AT THE MOUTH OF A PORT**

Oil on canvas

H. 0,96 m; W. 1,60 m

Signed and dated bottom left: *J. Vernet. f. 1781*

DATE: 1781

PROVENANCE:

Commissioned by Monsieur de La Freté in 1780

Probably Emile Péreire (1800-1875)

Péreire family until 2004

Private Collection

LITTERATURE:

Léon Lagrange, *Joseph Vernet et la peinture au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Livres de vérité, commandes*, Paris, 1864, receipt no. 216 (16 Nov 1780), no. 218 (29 Dec 1780) et no. 222 (22 April 1781).

Florence Ingersoll-Smouse, *Joseph Vernet, Peintre de marine 1714-1789. Etude critique suivie d'un catalogue raisonné de son œuvre peint*, Paris, 1926, vol. II, p. 32, no. 1046.

Vernet's seascapes made a striking impression of nature on Eighteenth century connoisseurs. In 1767 Diderot made the flattering comment that one could "visit" a painting by Vernet just as one may visit a natural site. Less idealistic than Claude Lorrain, Vernet matches exactly his contemporaries' taste, linking search of nature and sublime grandeur. The critics found the "truth" they were looking for from the middle of the century in his paintings, as states with enthusiasm La Font Saint-Yenne in his famous commentary on the *Salon* of 1746, where Vernet was exhibiting for the first time.

Like the *Ports of France* commissioned in 1753 by Louis XV - Vernet finished 15 of these huge paintings (musée du Louvre and musée de la Marine, Paris) - the present painting is dominated by an important expanse of sky, which gives an extraordinary brightness and sense of space. It shows an imaginary view of a Mediterranean port with a beautiful warship.

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