

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM

FINE ARTS

HENRI FANTIN-LATOURE

Grenoble 1836 - Buré 1904

French School

PLUMS

Oil on canvas

H. 0,16 m; W. 0,25 m

Signed and dated upper right: *6 Aout 1878 / Fantin*

DATE: 1878

PROVENANCE:

Edwin Edwards, London

Paul Tesse, Douai

His sale, Douai, 20 October 1919

Etienne Bignou, Paris

Sale Christie's London, 9 May 1924

Alex Reid & Lefevre, London

E. J. van Wisselingh & Co., Amsterdam

Private collection

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Victoria *Fantin-Latour*, *Catalogue de l'œuvre complet (1849-1904) de Fantin-Latour*, Paris, 1911, p. 95, n°901.

Our painting will be included in the forthcoming *Catalogue raisonné des peintures et pastels de Henri Fantin-Latour* being prepared by Brame & Lorenceau.

Henri Fantin-Latour first studied with his father, who was a portrait painter and pastel artist, and from 1850 with Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran (1802-1897). He remained with Lecoq for about six years, during which period he was for a short while an unsuccessful student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He completed his traditional training by copying the old masters at the Louvre, a practice he began in 1853 and continued for about twenty years. Fantin-Latour presented works for exhibition at the Salon for the first time in 1859. They were refused, but two or three of the paintings submitted were shown the same year in Bonvin's studio alongside works by Ribot, Vollon and Whistler. The last of these invited Fantin-Latour to travel to England in 1859. This and following trips (1861, 1864 and 1881) were vital for the development of his career. Contacts he made there, and especially his association with Edwin and Ruth Edwards, gave him access to the English market that allowed him to live on the sale of his still lifes for most of his life. Although the works of Fantin-Latour sent to the Salon for exhibition were mostly portraits, he also spent considerable time on what he called his projects of the imagination, the most important of which were inspired by music composed by Brahms, Schumann, Berlioz and Wagner.

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However, lithography, which he began to practice in the early 1860s, gave these imaginary compositions a favoured means of expression. The lithographs were regularly exhibited at the Salon from 1877 on, and towards the end of the century he was considered the greatest master of this art in France. His youthful enthusiasm for the work of Corot, Millet and Delacroix never weakened, unlike his interest in the work of his immediate contemporaries. Fantin-Latour met Courbet (1819-1877) in 1859 and attended the classes he gave in 1861. But his admiration for this artist did not last and as early as 1865, disenchanted with the world that surrounded him, he began to avoid the company of his contemporaries to develop his own style which was not subservient to any principle or school. In this way, even in Fantin-Latour's early works created under the Second Empire, it is extremely difficult to recognize what influenced his manner of painting and the most characteristic elements of his art come from his assimilation of the old masters and the acute observation of nature. As he said in 1866 to his friend and patron Edwin Edwards: "I even think that the time for artistic schools and movements has passed. After the Romantic movement, we notice that in all these ideas there is great stupidity. We will come to the personal way of feeling" (Jullien, 1909, p. 23). Thus his endearing work is set apart by the subtlety of chromatic orchestration and lyricism of compositions.