

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM

FINE ARTS

HENRI-JOSEPH HARPIGNIES

Valenciennes 1819 - Saint-Privé 1916

French school

THE PONT DE LA CONCORDE, PARIS, 1875

Watercolour on paper

H. 162 mm; W. 240 mm

Signed lower left: *H. Harpignies 1875*

DATE: 1875

PROVENANCE: Private collection

Henri-Joseph Harpignies's long life spanned many of the major movements in nineteenth-century painting. As he set out on his career the painters of the Barbizon School were emerging to challenge the traditional view of landscape painting and called for it to be elevated to the same status as history painting. Later, Harpignies witnessed the arrival of the Realist movement, and the rise of both Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. Although he was keenly interested in these movements and came to be influenced by them to some extent, analysis of his work shows that he remained indebted to the artistic influences of the first half of the nineteenth century. In this, he can be likened to his friend and mentor Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. His love for Rome and the surrounding countryside, coupled with his fondness for the classical landscape tradition, dominated his whole œuvre.

He studied under Jean Archard (1807-84). He visited Rome for the first time in 1850, staying at the Villa Medici. He spent two years studying in Italy, concentrating on the landscapes of the Campagna Romana. He also chose motifs from urban environments and on his visits to Naples produced a number of views of Vesuvius. He was particularly drawn to Capri, where he worked for six months. The influence of the island's landscapes on his painting was powerful and it was his View of Capri that was to mark his successful début at the Paris Salon in 1853.

A second visit to Italy in 1863-5 included a close and lengthy study of Corot's landscape paintings. In 1866, Harpignies's first major work, Evening in the Campagna Romana, brought him official recognition and established his reputation. The painting is now in the Louvre. He was to receive numerous public honours throughout his career and a great many of his works were acquired by public collections.

After his studies in Italy and his return to France, his style reached maturity of expression with rich and bold colours, marking his best period. He spent considerable time in the Burgundy countryside of the Yonne near the Canal du Nivernais. He moved to Burgundy in 1878.

This watercolour shows the Pont de la Concorde, an arch bridge across the Seine in Paris connecting the Place de la Concorde and the Quai d'Orsay. Its construction was completed in 1791, using the stones taken from the demolished Bastille for its masonry. Traffic across the bridge became very congested and the bridge had to be widened on both sides between 1930 and 1932, doubling the width of the original bridge.

Although the composition is carefully structured, the exuberance of the brushwork lends it spontaneity.

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