Joseph Bail (1862-1921) - Young kitchen boy playing with a cat



Oil on canvas signed lower right

Original canvas and stretcher - Perfect condition

Dimensions : H. 70 x W. 110 cm (with frame: H. 105 x W. 145 cm)

Born in 1862, Joseph Bail received a purely academic training under Carolus Duran (1837-1917) and Gérôme (1824-1904), two of the greatest official painters of the Second Empire. When he was just sixteen, he exhibited in Lyon in 1877; the following year, he exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Français in Paris, where he remained a faithful representative until his death.

Joseph Bail excelled in genre painting and still lifes. His admiration for the painter Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin (1699-1779) is omnipresent. Joseph Bail's world is realistic, poetic and, above all, witty. His interiors show young cooks, or young women in half-light, with light streaming in from a window, in the manner of Vermeer (1632-1675). His works inspire serenity and happiness without artifice. Joseph Bail was widely recognized for his work during his lifetime, winning the silver medal at the Exposition Universelle in 1889, the gold medal at the Exposition Universelle de Paris in 1900, and the medal of honor at the Salon des Artistes Français in 1902. Bail's works can be found in numerous museums, including the Petit Palais and Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille, the Musée de l'échevinage in Saintes, Mulhouse, Nancy and Montreal.

Our painting: This is an interior kitchen subject, witty as only this artist knew how to make them. This rare and very important work by Joseph Bail is large in size. It retains its magnificent original frame. The painting is in absolutely perfect condition, which is all the more rare with such a size: the canvas and stretcher are original, and no significant restoration work has been carried out, the only operation having been to remove the original varnish and apply a new one. The size, frame and level of

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completion of this work suggest that it was painted for the Salon painting, executed in the 1890s. It can be compared with the painting "Les Joueurs de cartes", considered as one of his major works: exhibited at the Salon des Artistes français in 1897, acquired the same year the same year by the City of Paris, and now housed in the city's Musée des beaux-arts de la ville au Petit-Palais.

Our painting "Jeune marmiton jouant avec un chat" (Young kitchen boy playing with a cat) reflects Joseph Bail's spirit and fetish objects: the slightly roguish little cook with a cigarette in his mouth, the open bottle of wine, the copper utensils, the glass jars and the cat playing with a feather make up an extremely rich composition. Joseph Bail's full-paste processing reveals his talent for reproducing materials and textures in all their suppleness and brilliance.