Raphael Ponson (1835-1904) - The white Two-mats



Oil on stiff cardboard, signed lower left

Dimensions : H. 47 x L. 30 cm (with frame: H. 67 x L. 49 cm)

Raphaël Ponson is a major Impressionist painter of the Marseilles School. He received a classical training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Marseille with Emile Loubon as his master. Ponson left us paintings with very well-balanced compositions; nourished by his love of the Mediterranean, he turned to plein air painting, which enabled him to produce superb views of Marseille, Martigues, the Cassis creeks and Nice, always with great accuracy.

Ponson's vigorous brushstrokes captured the light of the south to perfection. As early as 1872, critics recognised his paintings as mementos of the most beautiful sites on the Côte d'Azur. Raphael Ponson hesitated between Romanticism and Impressionism, with a technique that used both brush and knife. He is best known for his alternating brushstrokes for the relief and a more delicate, smooth style for the calm waters, where he mixes blue with green transparencies.

The reputation of this great artist has certainly suffered from the place that Jean-Baptiste Olive took in the same field and at the same time. Yet Ponson was no mere imitator of Olive, for his touch and palette are truly personal and subtle. Among Raphael Ponson's works held in museums, "Un nid de goélands à la calanque de Port-Mihou près Marseille", owned by the Musée des Archevêques in Narbonne, is a true masterpiece.

Our painting is an Impressionist work in its own right. The water is treated with rapid, horizontal strokes of pure colour, giving the perfect impression of the water's transparency. The boat is treated with much more substance, which catches and concentrates the powerful light of the sun. The sky is almost sketched out in a very light, transparent paint that perfectly captures the sensation of the rising heat of a summer morning. Finally, the boat and the small red spot are of crucial importance, as they form a vanishing line and give life to this pretty marine in perfect condition.

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