Jean-Baptiste Olive (1848-1936) - The entrance to the Port "La Joliette", Marseille



Oil on canvas, signed lower left

Dimensions : W. 73 cm x H. 50.5 cm (with frame: W. 113 cm x H. 90 cm)

Jean-Baptiste Olive was born in Marseille in 1848. He is recognized as the great marine painter of the Phocaean city.

After a classical apprenticeship where he learned to render the realism of still life, he went to Paris where he created decorations for the Cirque d'Hiver and the Sacré-Coeur Basilica in Montmartre. At the age of 23, OLIVE exhibited his first landscapes at the Salon des artistes français, and received immediate success. The painter then divided his time between Paris and Marseille, where he maintained a studio on the "Canebière". At the 1886 Salon, Jean-Baptiste Olive won a medal for a landscape of Marseille. In 1889, he created decorations for several pavilions at the Universal Exhibition. His painting, imbued with the light of the South of France, began to gain international recognition. He was a natural choice to participate in the decoration of the famous restaurant "Le Train Bleu" at the Gare de Lyon, where his work can still be admired today.

Jean Baptiste Olive is one of the three great masters of the Marseille school at the end of the 19th century, along with Paul Guigou and Adolphe Monticelli. His marine subjects are the most sought after, although Olive also produced some very beautiful still lifes. His meticulously composed scenes characterize the art of this painter, whose works are held in numerous museums.

This painting depicts his emblematic subject, the entrance to the port of Marseille. While the vast majority of Olive's views of the port of Marseille face the entrance to the Old Port, this one is a rare example of a painting oriented towards the entrance of the Joliette Basin. The latter was excavated and

developed between 1847 and 1853 to alleviate the congestion of the Old Port. A true historical document, this painting shows us what this charming port was like at the end of the 19th century, a basin that is now the "Grand Port Maritime de Marseille".

On the right, Olive depicts the Marseille Cathedral (La Major) next to Fort Saint-Jean. In the center of an intelligently crafted composition, the foothills of the Luberon mountain range can be discerned above a multitude of boats.

The Impressionist treatment of the water is magnificent. With small, comma-shaped strokes, Olive blends blues, greens, and purples to perfectly capture the colors of the Mediterranean. In the foreground, at the foot of the fort bathed in intense, warm light, a fishing boat returns to the old port, its waters shimmering with the setting sun. Jean-Baptiste Olive, a meticulous observer, has painstakingly rendered the effects of light filtering through the water in this work. The condition of this oil painting on its original canvas is excellent. The paint itself is absolutely pristine. The painting has been stripped of its original varnish to reveal the brilliance of the colors applied impasto. The original frame is a fitting tribute to this exceptional work.



