

258 views | Dec 18, 2018, 11:01am

19th-Century French Oil Painting Emerges After 130 Years, Sells Immediately Amid Genre's Hot Demand



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Arts

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Adrien Moreau(1843 - 1906) "La Réception au château" Oil on canvas23 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches Signed REHS
GALLERIES, INC., NEW YORK CITY

“La Réception au Château,” a meticulous framed oil on canvas depicting lavishly attired guests reveling by the water outside a grand country home, painted by nineteenth-century French artist Adrien Moreau, sold immediately to a buyer who walked into a Manhattan gallery. Fine art dealer Howard Rehs said Tuesday that of Rehs Galleries, Inc., didn’t even have time to display the work, which was initially sold by Boussod, Valadon in 1888, was recently acquired by Rehs. To his knowledge, the painting has never been on public view.

“It reappeared this year and we were offered this painting, and it sold very, very quickly,” Rehs said in an interview.

Moreau’s “Concert d’Amateurs dans un Atelier d’Artiste” (1873) marked his emergence into widespread fame, and his art became wildly popular, especially in America.

Rehs would not disclose the selling price or the name of the American buyer of “La Réception au Château,” but said that his gallery, among the world’s top dealers of nineteenth and early twentieth-century European paintings, acquires and sells immaculate works from that period. A century later, the buyers for Moreau and his contemporaries are mostly Americans, Rehs said.

“Finding great works that have not been seen in over 100 years is the dream of every art dealer,” Rehs said “Even better is finding them in pristine condition with their original frame. We have handled a number of paintings by Moreau, and this one ranks among the finest.”

The market has been heating up, with some collectors willing to buy without even viewing a painting that hasn’t been on the market for a century or longer.

Earlier this month, Rehs Galleries sold “Embarquement sur le quai des Esclavons, Venise,” a major painting by the French artist Felix Ziem (1821-1911), a century after Chicago taxi tycoon Walden W. Shaw acquired it from Moulton & Ricketts of Chicago. Shaw, along with John D. Hertz, established one of the pioneering cab companies. “It sold with just one email,” Rehs said. “The gallery never even had the opportunity to publicly exhibit it.”

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Last month, Rehs Galleries sold “Winter,” a painting by the American artist Daniel Ridgway Knight (1939-1924), which had remained with the family of American lumber magnate and collector John D. Ross (1842-1917), who acquired it shortly after its creation. Again, a new buyer swooped in it up before the painting could go on display. “It is nice to see strong interest in high quality nineteenth-century Academic works of art, but sometimes they go too fast,” Rehs said.

Moreau, who started his career as an apprentice glassmaker, left northeastern France for Paris to study at the École des Beaux-Arts under Léon Cogniet and Isidore Pils. He first exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1868, and was described by fellow artist and critic, Joseph Uzanne, as “among the ranks of the greatest painters of contemporary genre.” After disruption by the Franco-Prussian war, he returned to the salon where he continued to exhibit until his death. Moreau’s work is on display in museums in Carcassonne, Nantes and Troyes.

Moreau painted in oil and watercolor, and was highly regarded for his historical depictions of the French upper classes in past centuries, as well as genre landscape paintings featuring peasants in everyday life. Some of his oil paintings were grisaille, using only shades of grey or of another neutral color.

Rare book collectors and literary scholars may recall his watercolor illustrations and drawings on covers for authors such as Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Alphonse Daudet, and Honoré de Balzac.

Rehs Galleries is currently involved in catalogue raisonné research projects for Knight, Julien Dupré, Emile Munier, and Antoine Blanchard. Howard Rehs was a past president of the Fine Art Dealers Association, is currently on the Board of the

Antiques Council, and has been a member of the Internal Revenue Service's Art Advisory Panel since 2008.

*A multiple-award-winning journalist, I've held top editorial roles at The Associated Press and Dow Jones. A former student of literature, studio art and art history with deep working knowledge of finance and business, I explore the global art markets and cultural analysis. M... **MORE***

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