



Julie Duvidal De Montferrier (1797 - 1865) - Cleopatra's Death



15 000 EUR

Signature : Julie Duvidal de Montferrier

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 80 cm

Height : 100 cm

<https://www.proantic.com/en/1351522-julie-duvidal-de-montferrier-1797-1865-cleopatra039s-death.html>

Description

Julie Duvidal de Montferrier (Paris, 1797 - Paris, 1865).

Cleopatra's Suicide.

Around 1818.

Oil on canvas.

H: 100; L: 80cm. (39 3/4 x 31 1/2 inches)

This sober, close-up composition depicts the Egyptian queen a few minutes before her death, bitten by an asp. Cleopatra is already turning her gaze towards the afterlife; with one hand she delicately grasps the clasp of her garment to reveal her breast, while the deadly snake coils around the other. The drape of heavy red fabric contrasts with the immaculate flesh and the precious treatment of the jewels that soberly

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adorn the queen's shoulder and head.

This is one of the earliest known paintings by Julie Duvidal de Montferrier, who was a pupil of François Gérard at the time, having received a particularly careful education from Madame Campan at the Légion d'Honneur educational centre, where the study of fine art was high on the curriculum. The painting probably dates from the year before it was first exhibited at the Salon in 1819. There, she exhibited a portrait of her sister that bears witness to her distinctive personal style, a style that she would continue to assert over the years.

Comparison : Self-portrait by Julie Duvidal de Montferrier, 1819. Washington, National Museum of Women in the Arts.

This painting was produced when the young artist, still in her apprenticeship and more sure of her talents, around the age of 20 or 21, decided to try her hand at a historical subject. Gérard's influence is perceptible in the expression of the face and the complex, flowing drapery. This same expression was repeated by the artist at the Salon of 1819 with *L'Enfant malade, ou Clotilde demandant la guérison de son fils* (The sick child, or Clotilde asking for her son to be cured): the weeping mother raises her eyes to heaven and shows the same highly detailed touches of ornamentation standing out against drapery treated in broad brushstrokes.

Comparison : *L'Enfant malade, ou Clotilde demandant la guérison de son fils*, 1819. Bourg-en-Bresse, Musée du Monastère Royal de Brou.

But Julie Duvidal de Montferrier very soon

expressed her individuality in relation to her master through very velvety fades. David, in his correspondence with Gros, spoke of "whipped cream" and "flattering talents". Details such as Cleopatra's brooch or diadem, treated with great precision and a sharper line, add points of light and contrast to the composition, which, through its tones and the background treated in a subtle monochrome, give the scene a dramatic effect. She liked to depict broadly sketched, sparsely detailed backgrounds, in order to highlight the main figure.

Comparison : Portrait of Jeanne Campan, 1856, Musée du Château de Versailles.

This portrait has many similarities with Cleopatra: the treatment of the background and, surprisingly, she used the same red drapery years later.

Julie Duvidal de Montferrier, later known as Julie Hugo after her marriage in 1827 to Abdel Hugo, Victor Hugo's brother, had a brilliant career as a painter. She won a medal at the 1824 Salon, spent a year in Rome and was a pupil of François Gérard, Marie-Eléonore Godefroid and Jacques-Louis David. Her paintings can now be seen in a number of museums, including the Musée de Compiègne, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Orléans and Caen, the Musée de l'Armée, the Musée du Louvre, the Château de Versailles and, of course, Victor Hugo's house.

Bibliography :

Wildenstein Daniel et Guy, Documents complémentaires au catalogue de l'oeuvre de Louis David, Paris, 1937, n°1945, p. 227.