ANTOINE-LOUIS BARYE

JAGUAR MARCHANT

Oil on canvas

H : 37,5 cm, L : 46 cm

Signed in red « Barye » on the rocks.

Provenance:

Artist studio

After death Barye sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, February 7-12, 1876, n°64, "Jaguar marchant", (purchased 3 000 Frs by Hector Brame from the above sale)

F. Barbedienne Collection (n°751, Catalogue Fine Arts School Barye Exhibition, 1889)

F. Barbedienne after death sale, Paris, Galerie Durand-Ruel, June 2-3, 1892, no. 3

Durand Ruel Collection (from the above sale: 9000 Frs hammer price)

Mr and Mrs Potter Palmer Collection (from the above on June 17, 1892, at the Durand-Ruel Gallery

Sold at Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, May 12, 1978, n°186; Muriel S. and Noah L. Butkin collection.

(Thanks to Mme B. Tupinier-Barrillon and P-L and F. Durand Ruel for these details)

Exhibition Reference :

Barye Retrospective, Paris Fine Arts School, 1875, n°351.

Fine Arts School Barye Exhibition, 1889, n°751, F. Barbedienne collection

"Exhibition of Nineteenth Century French Painting at the Saginaw Museum", Saginaw Museum, 1949, n° 2. Loan from the Butkin Collection, Cleveland Museum of Art

Art Institute of Chicago.



In addition to their main tridimensional activity, the great 19th century sculptors were often interested in pictorial and graphic creations: Rodin practiced freely «instantaneous» drawings and Carpeaux realized dazzling paintings of passion. Barye left us a beautiful corpus of watercolours and paintings, including this one which is probably one of the most beautiful, if not the most. With this kind of production, these artists do not look for large pieces, generally works of small sizes are privileged in an idea of curiosity, relaxation, and freedom. In Barye's case, some watercolours were sold during his lifetime while the paintings were not intended for sale or edition, but only for his own sake. The sculptor devoted himself mainly to this activity during his summer time in Barbizon, from the early 1860s, where he painted in nature, like his contemporaries Diaz, Millet, Corot and Théodore Rousseau.

In his after-death inventory in 1875, half of the paintings was still in Barbizon and about thirty have been deployed or stored at the quai des Celestins in Paris « in the daughters' rooms, his office and in closets ». They are listed, like this one, in the catalogue of the after death sale of 1876 where, like most others, they were signed with red paint, with the similar stamp calligraphy known for watercolours, drawings and some plasters.

It is not only the strong immediate impression he made to us «in the image», as the most beautiful painting by the artist in private hands, and the fact that it is completely different from other paintings that convinced us without hesitation to acquire it. The analysis of an annotated catalogue of this sale in 1876 was also very instructive, even in the 19th century, the painting was already prized. The catalogue contains 730 lots including a set of 99 paintings, 70 watercolours and 57 lots of lithographs and drawings. The prices for the paintings oscillated between 80 and 150 Francs, some above 1000 Frs and a record at 3000 Frs. The watercolours left noticeably more expensive, 300 - 400 Frs on average, with a record at 2500 Frs for a Tigre couché ; lithographs and drawings, as for them, only a few dozen francs per lot.

Our Jaguar marchant, under the n°64, became the climax of this set, because of a record rating at 3000 Frs. the buyer was Hector Brame, dealer of paintings and future editor of Barye bronzes with F. Barbedienne. This latter became him-self owner of our painting in turn as detailled in the exhibition catalogue in 1889. The painting appeared in his after death sale in 1892, and this is Durand Ruel, the expert of this sale, who bought it three times the initial estimate for himself or an amateur (9700 Frs).The Durand Ruel Archives let us know that the painting was purchased only 14 days after the

Barbedienne sale by Mr and Mrs Potter Palmer. These American collectors owned an impressive collection of impressionist paintings and had also several drawings by Barye, mainly loaned later to the Art Institute of Chicago (including the Jaguar debout watercolour, inv. 1930.818, which also reminds our Jaguar).

The analysis of the rest of the annotated catalogue agreed with this idea because, in the part dedicated to the sculptures, only some, and still the most important, iconic or large dimensions, have approached or exceeded this price, like the Jaguar au lièvre (No 406, Goujon purchase, 2 900 Frs), Theseus combattant le Minotaure, bronze, (No 428, Brame purchase 3 200 Frs), Theseus fighting the Minotaur, bronze model (No 580 Goupil purchase 5 050 Frs for Barbedienne), Theseus combattant le centaure Biénor, original size, bronze model (No 715, Goupil purchase 7 100 Frs for Barbedienne...) Actually, this price does not surprise us: it is a large painting compared to the others and the beast occupies the central place as the real subject; the jaguar is treated here in a naturalistic spirit, which is close to the treatment of the Jaguar marchant n°1 (circa 1857). It moves in a sketched landscape with broad lines which is here only to put emphasis on it. The contrasts are strong and the animal contours are underlined, standing out from a deep sky and in a luminous field that give it all its power.

This canvas is completely different from the others, often dark, difficult to read and whose bithumous varnish has sometimes altered the values at lightning and leading to blacken it. This work is similar to watercolours, but with more power, having escaped the fading of the colours that so often characterize them; it can be compared to similar works by Delacroix.