

Joseph Bail (1862-1921) - In the kitchen



Oil on canvas signed lower left

Dimensions : H. 73 x W. 100 cm (with frame: H. 100 x W. 128 cm)

Born in 1862, Joseph Bail received a purely academic training under Carolus Duran (1837-1917) and Gérôme (1824-1904), two of the greatest official painters of the Second Empire. When he was just sixteen, he exhibited in Lyon in 1877; the following year he exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Français in Paris, where he was a faithful representative until his death.

Joseph Bail excelled in genre painting and still lifes. His admiration for the painter Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin (1699-1779) is omnipresent. Joseph Bail's world is realistic, poetic and, above all, witty. His interiors show young cooks, or young women in half-light with light streaming in from a window, in the manner of Vermeer (1632-1675). His works inspire serenity and happiness without artifice. Joseph Bail was widely recognised for his work during his lifetime, winning a silver medal at the Exposition Universelle in 1889, a gold medal at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900, and a medal of honour at the Salon des Artistes Français in 1902. Bail's works are held in many museums, including the Petit Palais and the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille, the Musée de l'échevinage in Saintes, Mulhouse, Nancy and Montreal.

Our painting: This is one of the rare large paintings by Joseph Bail depicting a kitchen interior, one of the artist's most popular subjects. This work is still in its original wood and gilded stucco frame, and is in absolutely perfect condition. Like "Les Joueurs de cartes", exhibited at the Salon des Artistes français in 1897, acquired the same year by the City of Paris, and now in the city's Musée des beaux-arts in the Petit-Palais, our painting features four figures and numerous utensils. Using a thick pictorial material, Joseph Bail shows us his ability to reproduce all materials: the suppleness of textiles, the shine of copper and earthenware, the transparency of glass, are rendered with exceptional technique and accuracy. The composition is admirable, with a space between the young girl and the boys, the starting point of the vanishing line that leads the viewer's eye to the point of light in the background where a 5th character can be made out.

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