

Charles Alexandre Coessin de la Fosse (1829-1916) - Gallant discussion



Oil on canvas, signed lower right

Dimensions : H. 81 x W. 65 cm (With its original frame: H. 123 x W. 109 cm)

Charles Alexandre Coessin de la Fosse is a perfect example of the great French painters of the 19th century, whose training was purely academic and whose talent was swept away by the arrival of the Impressionist movement. Originally from Calvados, Coessin de la Fosse completed his training at the Paris School of Fine Arts with two great masters, François-Édouard Picot and Thomas Couture. Picot still belonged to the neoclassical school, and gave Coessin the foundations of his art. Couture, whose monumental historical compositions adorn the great hall of the Musée d'Orsay, steered Coessin towards this academic style, which he never abandoned despite the arrival of so-called modern, naturalist and impressionist painting. This generation of artists, faithful to their apprenticeship, received numerous awards at the beginning of the 20th century, before sinking into oblivion even before the Second World War.

But art lovers were not mistaken, and it's hardly surprising that Coessin's works can be found in the collections of France's greatest museums, as well as in private collections. In 1930, "Procession around a Stone Cross" entered the Louvre, a drawing now held by the Musée d'Orsay. In 1897, Coessin's "Dessert", painted in 1873, was acquired by the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Reims. In 1998, "Diane chasseresse", a purely academic work by Coessin, was sold on 7 May 1998 for over 75,000 euros by Sothebys in New York.

Our painting, which is large for Coessin, depicts a 17th century inn scene. The postures of the maid and the man-at-arms are perfectly studied. Each in their own role, exerting their charm on the other, the two characters show us a very pretty scene of seduction. Every detail has been reproduced with precision; the suppleness and veracity of the fabrics and materials are perfectly rendered. The cat seems jealous of the complicity between the woman and the man, and its posture adds life to this composition.

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Coessin de la Fosse constructed this painting perfectly: the figures, the cat and the objects, emerge from an almost black background; the play of light and shadow gives astonishing relief to this important work, which is on its original canvas, in perfect condition. The painting is still in its original late 19th-century frame, with an imposing, richly gilded decoration against a dark background that oscillates between the neo-Gothic style of Violet le Duc and the beginnings of Art Nouveau.

