

Jean-Léon Gérôme



1824-1904 | FRENCH

La danse pyrrhique

M.S. Rau
FINE ART • ANTIQUES • JEWELS

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Oil on canvas | Circa 1885
Signed "J.L. Gérôme" (lower right)

Canvas: 25 ³/₄" high x 36 ³/₈" wide | 65.41 cm x 92.39 cm
Frame: 38 ¹/₂" high x 49 ¹/₄" wide x 3 ³/₄" deep
97.79 cm x 125.10 cm x 9.53 cm

“

Draw with the weight of
antiquity and paint with
the eyes of youth.

– Jean-Léon Gérôme

”



This painting by Jean-Léon Gérôme entitled *La danse pyrrhique* is among the most fascinating compositions ever composed by the Academic master's hand. Gérôme's iconic scenes of the East captivated a generation, and this work showcases all of the artist's unparalleled talents. Set in the Ptolemaic period of Ancient Egypt, its depiction of the ritual Pyrrhic dance is vivid and striking. Beautifully painted and rich with detail, it represents the best of Gérôme's famed Orientalist scenes.

In *La danse pyrrhique*, Gérôme gives us a dramatic rendering of this ancient war dance. Greek in origin, it was performed by costumed dancers armed with swords who completed a series of movements set to music, pantomiming combat. Homer wrote that Achilles performed this dance in a show of respect and grief at the funeral of his friend, Patroclus. When Julius Caesar introduced it to the Roman Games, its popularity spread across the Roman Empire to include Egypt, where Gérôme's composition is set.

Gérôme visited Egypt for the first time in 1856, and he returned throughout the late 19th century when this work was created. Gérôme's first-hand familiarity with this setting is evident in this piece, and his visual narrative is unlike any other. His paintings combine the rationalist style of historical paintings and the theatrical Romantic aesthetic, including some of Gérôme's own artistic license. This work is set in front of the Temple of Isis at Philae Island, but the artist has slightly altered the hieroglyphics at the entrance, perhaps to better mimic the central dancers. While the backdrop is awe-inspiring, it is the dancers themselves that are unquestionably the focus of the composition. Exactingly rendered, they show Gérôme's mastery over the human form seen in his intense study of their musculature and movement.

The most prominent French academic painter of the 19th century, Gérôme was also among the foremost

inventors of Orientalist themes. After the year he spent in Rome with his teacher Paul Delaroche in 1843, he developed an insatiable appetite for traveling, which inspired his treks to Egypt, Turkey and North Africa. He meticulously researched and recorded the costume and customs of the Near East, as evidenced by the myriad details of the present composition. During his career, Gérôme achieved great popularity and had considerable influence as a defender of academic tradition. While teaching at the highly regarded *École des Beaux-Arts*, Gérôme exhibited in countless Salons and was actively courted and patronized by collectors. The majority of Gérôme's works were eventually gifted to major museums, and very few reside in private hands.

This spectacular work once belonged to the Najd collection, widely considered the most important assembly of Orientalist artworks in private hands. Select works from this collection have been placed on long-term loan to prestigious museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut, where the present work was once on view. This great work is featured in numerous books on the artist, including the artist's catalogue raisonné by Gerald M. Ackerman.



PROVENANCE

Gail Borden Munsill, c.1890-1910

Ruth Clark Holmes Munsill, by 1941, by descent from the above

Penelope Holmes Munsill Harris, by descent from the above

Laurence van Doren Harris Jr., by descent from the above

Daniel B. Grossman, Inc., New York

Sotheby's Parke Bernet, 25 January 1980, lot 292 (titled *La Phyrrique*)

Phillips, London, 30 October 1981

The Fine Art Society, London, by April 1984 (titled *The Sword Dance*, stock no. E6/21)

The Najd collection, acquired from the above in the 1980s

M.S. Rau, New Orleans

LITERATURE

Oeuvres de J.L. Gérôme, vol. XXIII, 13, illustrated (as *La Phyrrique*)

Pheobe Pool, *Impressionism*, London, 1967, pp. 92 & 274, fig. 65 (titled *Sword Dance*, illustrated)

P. A. Clayton, *The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt: Artists and Travellers in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1982, p. 178, (titled *Sword Dance*, illustrated)

G. M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, Paris, 1986, pp. 173, 290-91, no. 487 (illustrated)

C. Juler, *Najd Collection of Orientalist Paintings*, London, 1991, pp. 141 & 152 (illustrated)

G. M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme: His Life, His Work*, Paris, 1997, p. 175 (titled *The Pyrrhic Dance*)

This painting is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity and will be included in Dr. Emily M. Weeks' revision of the artist's catalogue raisonné by Gerald M. Ackerman.

EXHIBITED

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut, long-term loan



Emily M. Weeks, Ph.D.
 Fine Arts Research and Consulting
 51 Saybrook Road
 Essex, CT 06426
 860-964-9180 (cell)
emweeks.art@gmail.com
www.thenewgerome.com

JEAN-LÉON GÉRÔME
 (Vesoul, 1824 - Paris, 1904)
La Danse Pyrrhique
 signed J.L. GEROME lower right
 oil on canvas
 66 by 92 cm., 26 by 36 in.

PROVENANCE:

Gail Borden Munsill (circa 1890-1910)
 Ruth Clark Holmes Munsill (by 1941; by descent from the above)
 Penelope Holmes Munsill Harris (by descent from the above)
 Laurence van Doren Harris Jr. (by descent from the above)
 Daniel B. Grossman, Inc., New York (sale: Sotheby's, Parke Bernet, 25 January 1980, lot 292)
 Sale: Phillips, London, 30 October 1981
 The Fine Art Society, London (by April 1984; stock no. E6 / 21)
 Purchased from the above

EXHIBITED:

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (on long-term loan)

LITERATURE:

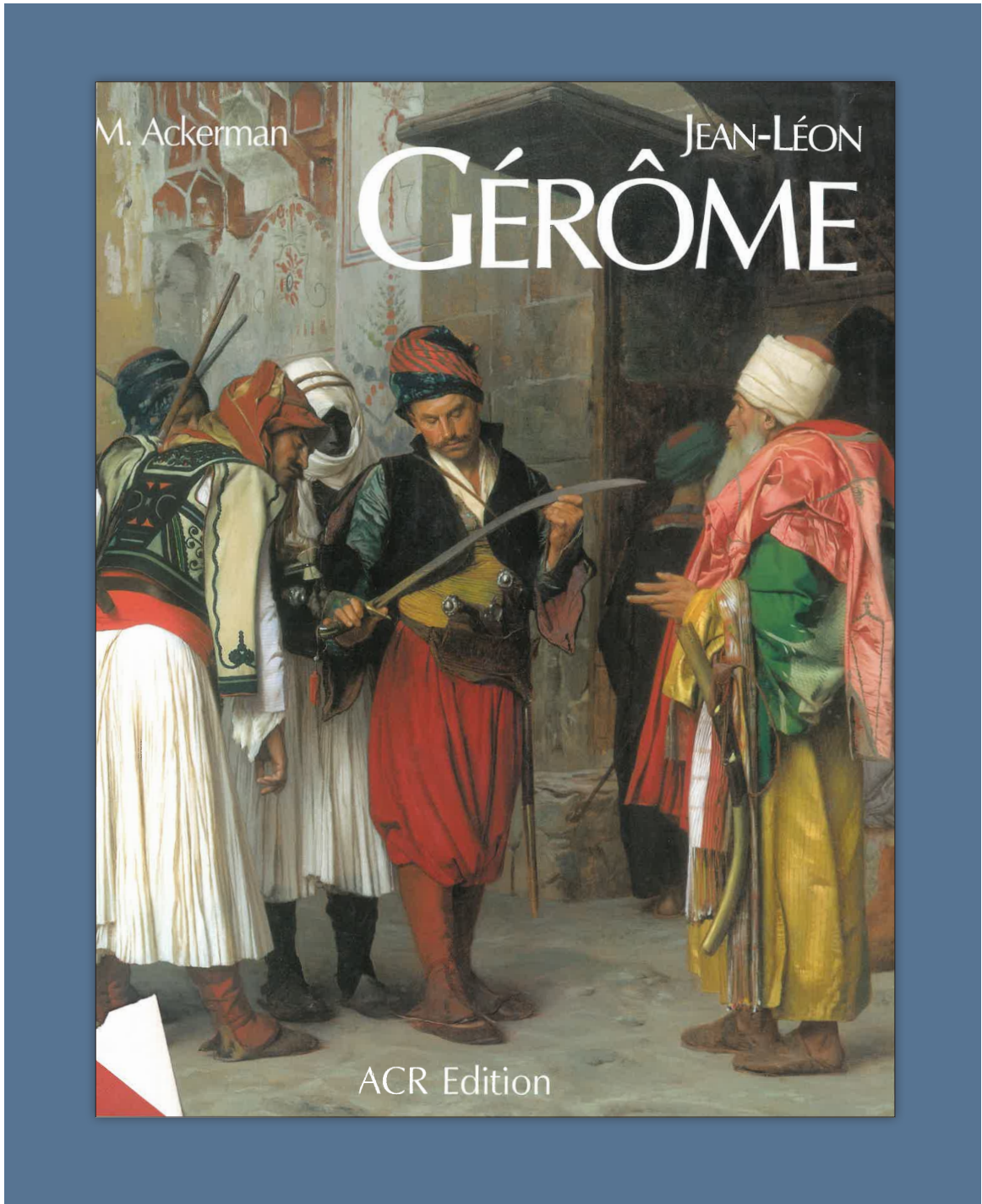
Possibly, *Oeuvres de J.L. Gérôme*, vol. XXIII, 13, illustrated (as *La Pyrrique* [sic])
 Phoebe Pool, *Impressionism*, London, 1967, p. 92, fig. 65, described & illustrated (as *Sword Dance*), p. 274,
 catalogued (as present whereabouts unknown)
 Peter A. Clayton, *The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt: Artists and Travellers in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1982, p.
 178, illustrated (as *Sword-Dance*)
 Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, Paris, 1986, p. 173, (as *The Pyrrhic Dance*),
 illustrated, pp. 290-91, no. 487, catalogued & illustrated (as *The Pyrrhic Dance* [*Sword dance before Egyptian*
ruins]/*La Danse pyrrhique*)
 Caroline Juler, *Najd Collection of Orientalist Paintings*, London, 1991, p. 141, described, p. 152, catalogued &
 illustrated
 Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme: His Life, His Work*, Paris, 1997, p. 175 (as *The Pyrrhic Dance*)
 Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme, Monographie révisée*, Paris, 2000, p. 180, illustrated, pp. 360-61, no.
 487, catalogued & illustrated (as *La Danse pyrrhique*)

Based on the results of my independent research, and having viewed the work via a high-resolution digital file, it is my opinion that the picture *La danse pyrrhique* is an original oil painting entirely by the hand of the French artist Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904). It will be included as such in my forthcoming revision of the artist's catalogue raisonné.



Emily M. Weeks, Ph.D.
 1 November 2019





G. M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, Paris, 1986, pp. 173, 290-91, no. 487 (illustrated)



Gérôme

Le Modèle vivant, esquisse à l'huile La Promenade dans le parc

Vers 1900. Musée Garret, Vesoul.
Panneau, 54,5 x 81 cm. Cachet de l'atelier (vers 1975-1980).
: Héritiers d'Aimé-Morot. Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 28 mai 1980, n° 98. Hôtel
:, Couturier commissaire-priseur, 16 décembre 1980, n° 26. Galerie Bideau,
vendit au musée en 1982.
re : inachevé, essentiellement une première couche. Le sujet est inspiré
ote introuvable (peut-être originale) relative à un modèle posant comme une
un jardin italien. Plusieurs esquisses connues pour les figures.

es orientales compliquées

Le Charmeur de serpents

Tardif. Isaac Delgado Museum of Art, La Nouvelle Orléans (Louisiane).
Toile, 91,5 x 73,5 cm. Signé en bas à gauche, sur le couvercle du panier.
: Mr. Chapman Hymans, La Nouvelle Orléans. Cummer Gallery of Art, Artists
Salon, Jacksonville (Floride), 1964, n° 22.
re : Pastiche amusant, par Gérôme, d'œuvres et de notes plus anciennes. Un
d'éléments ont été tirés d'études faites pour *Le Charmeur de serpents* de
n, n° 282. Le vieil homme, debout, avec luth arabe, et curieusement adapté
même dessin préparatoire d'un vieil homme nu dansant (dans la collection de
) que Gérôme avait utilisé pour *Anacréon* de 1848, n° 19.
ie : R. B. Mayfield, *The Art Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Chapman, H. Hymans*,
Orléans, 1915, n° 12. *Catalogue d'Atlanta*, 1983, n° 37.

Attribué à Gérôme : En faction

Tardif. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.
Toile, 81 x 65 cm. Signé en bas à gauche.
: Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 18 mars 1933, n° 30 ; description. Sir Alfred Charles
en fit don à la nation en 1950 ; transféré à la National Gallery en 1978.
aire : Tableau peu satisfaisant, comme achevé par une autre main. Le garde
particulier, inspiré de celui du cat. n° 501, est peint d'une manière très faible
Gérôme. Le conservateur du musée de Dublin nous a certifié que la technique
je à celle de leur autre tableau de Gérôme, notre cat. n° 443.
ihle : *Catalogue of the Chester Beatty Collection*, Dublin, 1950, n° 26. James
, *The Orient : Imagined, Experienced, Remembered*, National Gallery, Dublin,
5.

Les Pigeons

1894. Collection particulière.
Toile, 60 x 81 cm. Signé en bas à gauche sur les marches.
a : Gérôme à Boussod, Valadon & Cie, 1894. B.V. & Cie à Knoedler, New York,
000 francs. SPBNY, 1938, vente 45, n° 512. Schnittjer à Moe Van Brink
de la famille Sordoni, Wilkes-Barre (Pennsylvanie). Mr. Joey Tanenbaum,
hristie's, Londres, 17 mars 1989, n° 49 ; vendu à Poly Peck International pour
vres sterling. Vente Poly Peck International, Phillips, Londres, 19 février 1991,
alerie d'Orsay, *J.-L. Gérôme, Maître de l'Orientalisme*, Paris, 1995. Christie's,
14 février 1996, n° 24, 500 000 dollars.

La Danse pyrrhique

Tardif. Collection Najd. c/o Mathaf Gallery, Londres.
Toile, 63,5 x 89 cm. Signé en bas à droite sur une pierre.
e : Gail Borden Munsill, vers 1890-1910. Penelope Holmes Munsill Harris à
urence van Doren Harris, Jr. SPBNY, 25 janvier 1980, vente 4335, n° 292. Vente
ondres, 30 octobre 1981, à Daniel B. Grossman, Inc.

Commentaire : Pourrait être regroupé avec les danses pyrrhiques orientalistes (nos 243 à 245, 1875, 271, 1878, et 335, 1885) en raison de la similarité dans la représentation de la foule, particulièrement dans la toile de 1885.

Bibliographie : *Œuvres de J.-L. Gérôme* (Bibliothèque nationale, Paris), XXIII, 13. Caroline Juler, *Najd Collection of Orientalist Paintings*, Londres, 1991, p. 152.

488 La Revue du chef, esquisse à l'huile

Commentaire : L'œuvre vendue sous ce titre en 1933 et en 1998 est le cat. n° 209, *Fantasia sur la plage de Tanger*.

489 La Chasse au lion, ébauche

Tardif. Musée Garret, Vesoul.
Toile, 65,5 x 92 cm. Cachet en bas à droite : « Atelier L. Gérôme ».

Historique : Donation Morot-Dubufe, 1945.

Commentaire : Inachevé. Une femme, inspirée de la sculpture de Gérôme S. 66, danse à côté du lion d'après S. 45, *Plaudite cives*. Sa jupe est partiellement peinte en bleu, et à part cela, le dessin et le quadrillage sous sa silhouette sont visibles par transparence. De nombreux dessins préparatoires pour cette composition se trouvaient sur le marché en 1978.

Bibliographie : *Catalogue de Vesoul*, 1981, n° 159.

490 Cercle de Gérôme : L'Arabe effaroucheur d'alouettes, esquisse

Très tardif. Musée Garret, Vesoul.
Toile, 44 x 74 cm. Signé en bas à gauche.

Commentaire : Inachevé. A la fin de sa vie, Gérôme a peint des vols d'oiseaux dans plusieurs tableaux à propos de Napoléon (nos 464 à 466) et de très belle façon dans *Les Pigeons*, n° 486. La composition, du moins d'après ce que nous en connaissons, est curieuse, c'est le moins que l'on puisse dire.

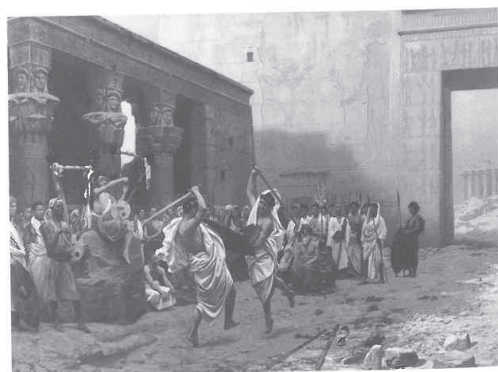
Bibliographie : *Catalogue de Vesoul*, 1981, n° 160.

490.5 Attribué à Gérôme : Le Souk des dinandiers

Tardif. Perdu.
Toile, 51 x 40,5 cm.

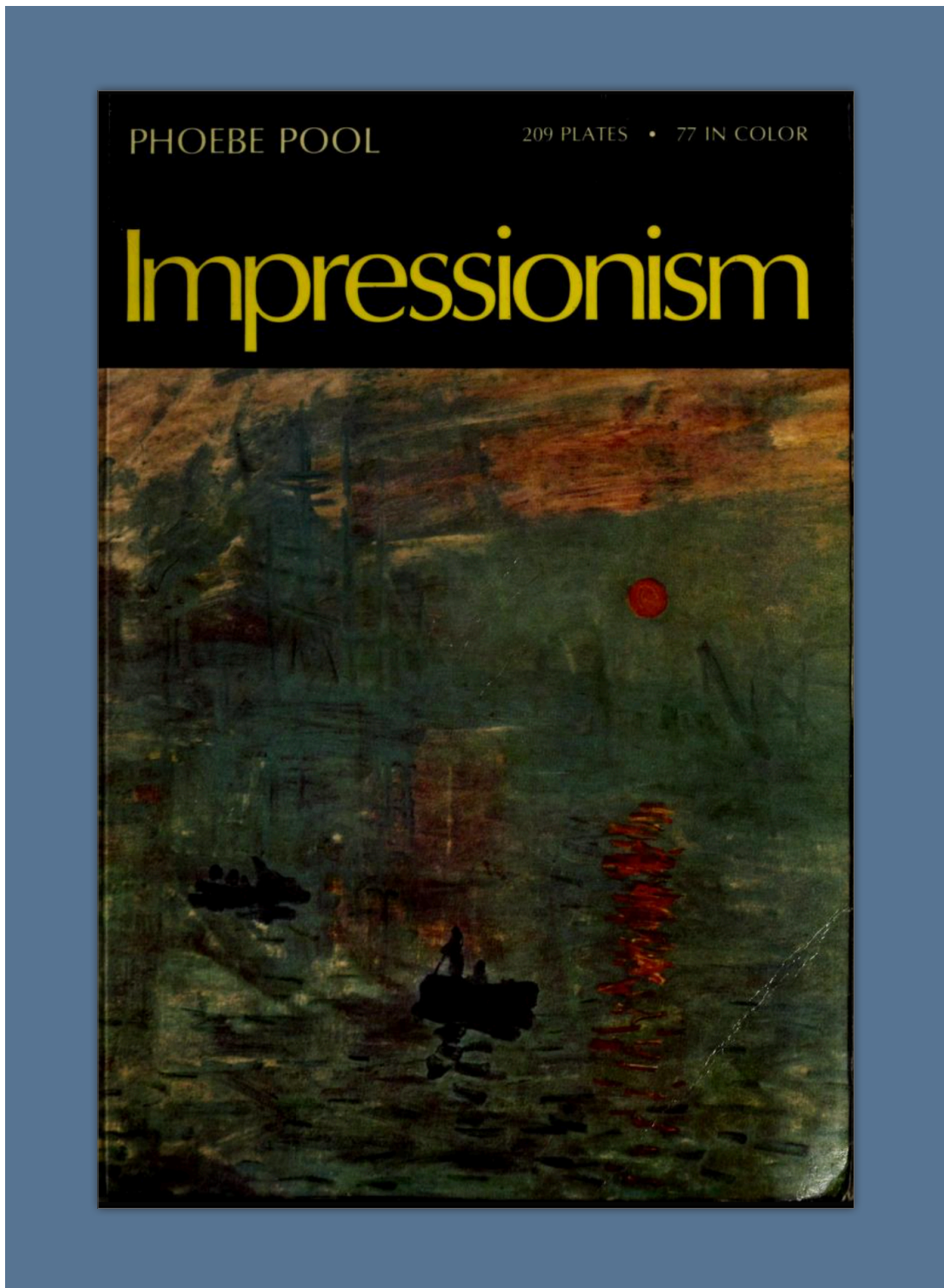
Commentaire : Attribution incertaine. Nous ne connaissons le tableau que par une ancienne photographie colorée à la main (reproduite ci-contre) qui ne permet pas de déterminer avec certitude si elle a été peinte ou non par Gérôme. Le thème est typique des œuvres qu'il a exécutées vers 1890 (voir cat. n° 409).

487



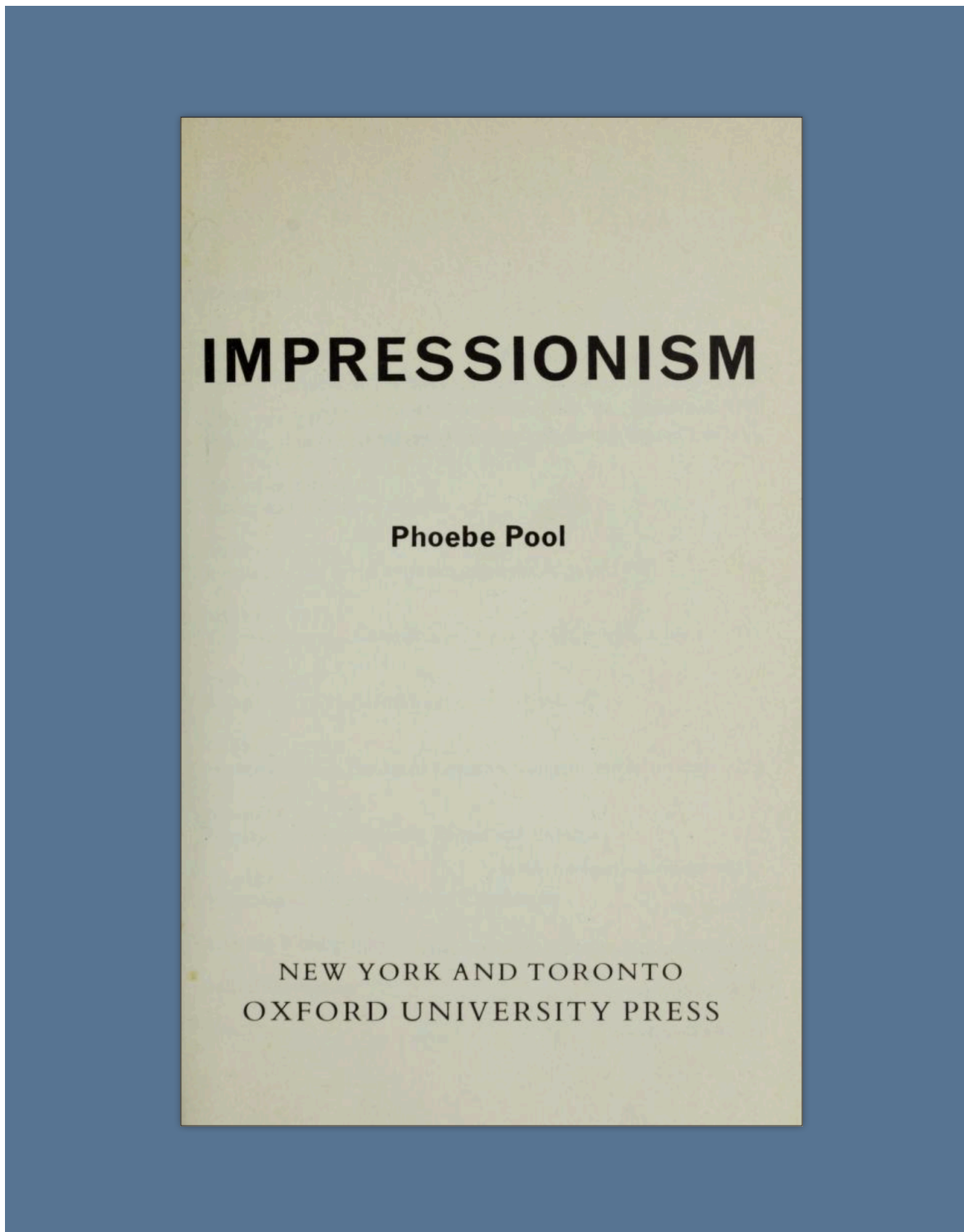
G. M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, Paris, 1986, pp. 173, 290-91, no. 487 (illustrated)





Phoebe Pool, *Impressionism*, London, 1967, pp. 92 & 274, fig. 65 (titled *Sword Dance*, illustrated)





Phoebe Pool, *Impressionism*, London, 1967, pp. 92 & 274, fig. 65 (titled *Sword Dance*, illustrated)



The impromptu, immediate notation favoured by the Impressionists was not really suited to the solid documentation demanded by Zola, or for realizing Duranty's ideal that even the representation of a man's back should reveal his age, temperament and social status and whether he was coming from work or from a rendezvous. But the painters agreed entirely with the writers that the contemporary scene was their only possible subject-matter, and they did not hesitate to render the crowded, gas-lit boulevards of Paris, or informal family picnics. While this seems quite natural to us, it must be remembered that the most popular Salon pictures were still Gérôme's historical compositions (such as his *Sword Dance*, Ill. 65), which so often combined inaccurate historical details with unmistakably nineteenth-century gestures and faces. It was not long since Fantin-Latour had



65 Gérôme *Sword Dance*

AUCTION COMPARABLES



Jean-Léon Gérôme
La grande piscine à Brusa (The great bath at Bursa)

oil on canvas
Height 70 x Width 100.5 cm.
Height 27.559 x Width 39.567 in.
1885

15 June 2004 *over 20 years ago*
Sotheby's London
19th Century European Paintings – [Lot 00112]

est. 900,000 - 1,200,000 GBP **1,909,600** GBP (P)
est. 1,645,348 - 2,193,797 USD **3,491,063** USD (P)
↑ 59% est



Jean-Léon Gérôme
THE HAREM IN THE KIOSK

oil on canvas
Height 76 x Width 112 cm.
Height 29.921 x Width 44.094 in.

22 October 2019 *over 5 years ago*
Sotheby's London
Important Works from the Najd Collection – [Lot 00029]

est. 3,000,000 - 5,000,000 GBP **2,655,000** GBP (P)
est. 3,885,507 - 6,475,845 USD **3,438,673** USD (P)

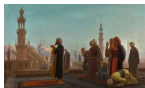


Jean-Léon Gérôme
PRAYERS IN THE MOSQUE

oil on canvas
Height 66 x Width 93 cm.
Height 25.984 x Width 36.614 in.

22 October 2019 *over 5 years ago*
Sotheby's London
Important Works from the Najd Collection – [Lot 00006]

est. 1,500,000 - 2,000,000 GBP **1,095,000** GBP (P)
est. 1,942,753 - 2,590,338 USD **1,418,210** USD (P)



Jean-Léon Gérôme
EVENING PRAYER, CAIRO

oil on panel
Height 49.5 x Width 81 cm.
Height 19.488 x Width 31.89 in.

30 April 2019 *almost 6 years ago*
Sotheby's London
The Orientalist Sale – [Lot 00022]

est. 600,000 - 800,000 GBP **735,000** GBP (P)
est. 781,758 - 1,042,345 USD **957,654** USD (P)



Jean-Léon Gérôme
Bethsabée (Bathsheba)

oil on canvas
Height 60.2 x Width 97.5 cm.
Height 23.701 x Width 38.386 in.
1889

21 October 2022 *over 2 years ago*
Christie's New York
The Ann & Gordon Getty Collection: Volume 2 | Old Master, 19th and 20th Century Paintings, Day Sale – [Lot 00154]

est. 400,000 - 600,000 USD **403,200** USD (P)

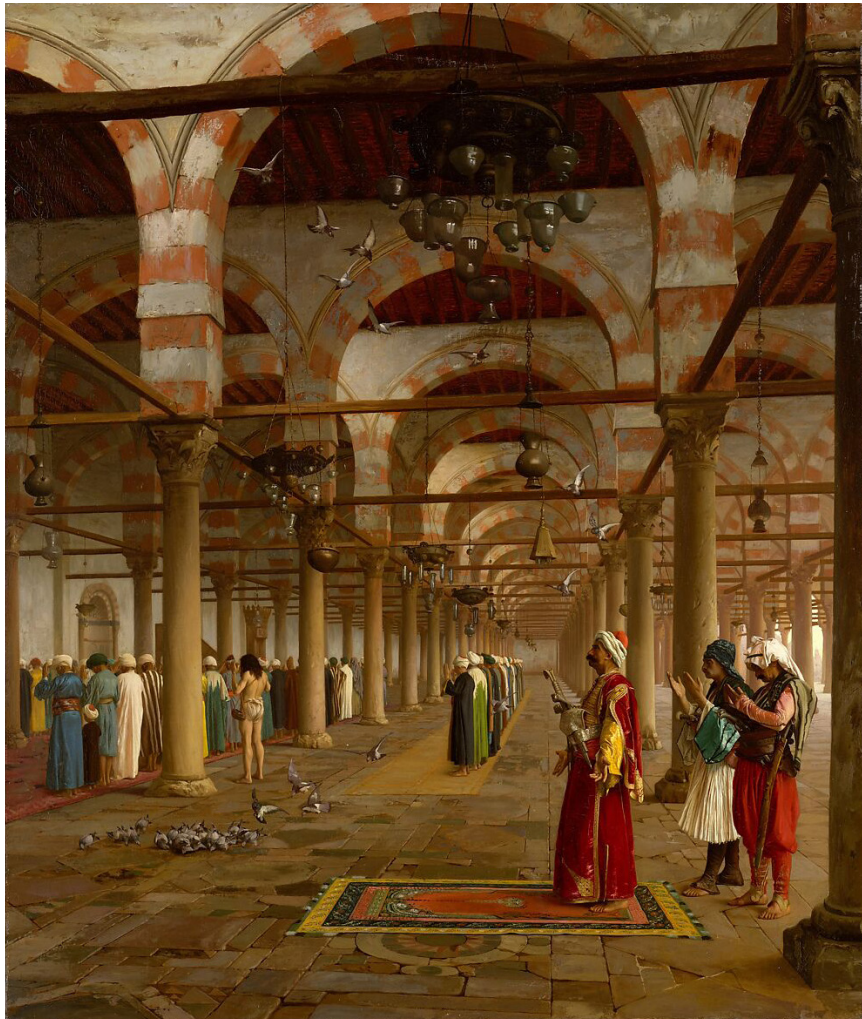


Jean-Léon Gérôme | *Prayer in the Mosque*

1871

Medium: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 35 x 29^{1/2} inches | 88.9 x 74.9 cm



The Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York, NY, United States



Jean-Léon Gérôme | *Réception du Grand Condé par Louis XIV*

1878

Medium: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 38 x 55 inches | 96.5 x 139.7 cm



Musée d'Orsay
Paris, France



Jean-Léon Gérôme | *L'Eminence Grise*

1873

Medium: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 27 x 39^{1/4} inches | 68.6 x 101 cm



MFA/Boston

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Boston, MA, United States



Jean-Léon Gérôme | *The Death of Caesar*

1859-67

Medium: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 33^{11/16} x 57^{5/16} inches | 85.5 x 145.5 cm



**THE WALTERS
ART MUSEUM**

The Walters Art Museum
Baltimore, MD, United States



M.S.  Rau
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