

Lot 1172



Auction Fine Art

Date 18.11.2021, ca. 12:10

Preview 12.11.2021 - 10:00:00 bis
15.11.2021 - 18:00:00

PILNY, OTTO
1866 Budweis - 1936 Zürich

Title: Slave Trade in the Desert.
Technique: Oil on canvas.
Mounting: Laid down on wood.
Measurement: 54 x 73cm.
Notation: Signed lower right: Otto Pilny.
Frame/Pedestal: Framed.

Provenance:
Private ownership, Germany.

Otto Pilny began his artistic training in Prague. After a short stay in Vienna, he settled in Zurich. Like many of his contemporaries, North Africa was one of the great passions of the painter born in Budweis in southern Bohemia. Pilny travelled to Egypt twice, the first time when he was only 19, spending two years on the caravan route between Cairo and Tripoli. The landscape, the people and their customs captivated him so much that he was to paint Orientalist works for the rest of his career. He was particularly taken with the customs of the Bedouins, with whom he often travelled into the desert and sketched the evening entertainment there, which he later captured on his huge canvases. His second trip to the Orient lasted from 1889 to 1892, during which time his work came to the attention of Egypt's King Abbas II and Pilny received the honourable commission to decorate the Order of the Medjidije.

On his return home, Otto Pilny transformed his experiences into atmospheric, often erotically charged scenes showing beautiful, half-naked or even completely naked women. In doing so, he made use of motifs from Western male fantasies, similar to Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' or Jean-Léon Gérôme's. The images allowed European viewers to look at naked women and at the same time address and morally condemn issues such as voyeurism or violence against women. Meanwhile, the slave trade was one of the artist's favourite themes. No less than two works by Otto Pilny in the upcoming auction address the trade in women, in which the almost sublime-looking women stand out above all because of their particular beauty.

But the present paintings are also impressive examples of the luminosity that is so typical of Pilny's work. As the sun sets, the silhouettes of the detailed Bedouins and their beautiful, half-naked slave girls are clearly highlighted. The orange and pale pink or violet hues produced by the desert sun and partially reflected by the light sand were of

particular interest to the artist.

Pilny was a prolific painter and, driven by his love of the Orient, left behind an extensive body of work in which the warm hues and vibrant atmosphere of the desert dominate his oeuvre.

Estimate: 10.000 € - 15.000 €
