

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Eugène-Jean Damery
(Paris 1823 – 1853 Nice)

Self-portrait of the artist

Signed, dated and located lower right: *E Damery roma 1844*

Pencil on paper

36.1 x 27.8 cm. (14 ¼ x 10 ¾ in.)

Provenance:

By descent in the Rothschild family, Château de Ferrières, France;

Until their sale, Christie's Paris, 16 November 2023, lot 168.



Eugène-Jean Damery depicts himself at the tender age of twenty-one, shortly after having arrived in Rome as winner of the Grand Prix for history painting. There was no greater prize for a young painter in France at this time and this, coupled with the exceptional quality of the present work, is testament to Damery's precocious talent. Unfortunately, his potential was never to be realised, with the artist sadly dying at the age of thirty and he has been neglected since, there being few known extant works by his hand.

The reappearance of this beautiful portrait, which was until recently in the Rothchild collection and comes with its original, celebratory frame, is a welcome addition to Damery's small oeuvre. We can be sure of the sitter by comparison to a slightly later self-portrait of an older, moustachioed Damery (fig. 1).

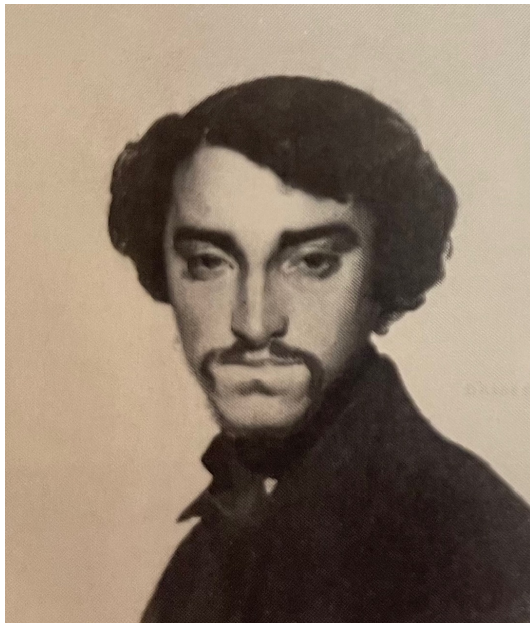


Fig. 1, Eugène-Jean Damery, *Self-portrait*, circa 1846, oil on canvas, location unknown



Fig. 2, Robert Bingham after Paul Delaroche, *Alphonse de Lamartine*, 1858, albumen print, 15.5 x 11.2 cm, Musée d'Orsay

Born in Paris, Damery studied under Paul Delaroche, alongside Henri-Pierre Picou and Jean Léon Gérôme. The three would remain close and indeed Damery would travel in Italy together with Delaroche and Gérôme, in his prize-winning year of 1843. Clearly Damery's refined and confident graphic style owes something to Delaroche's (fig. 2), with its use of line and shading, as was indeed also the case with Gérôme.

The subject of Damery's Grand Prix winning painting was *Oedipus and Antigone exiled from Thebes*, now in the École des Beaux-Arts (fig. 3). Second place would go to François-Léon Bennouville, who went on to win the Prix de Rome himself in 1845 and have the type of successful Salon career that was denied Damery by his premature death.



Fig. 3, Eugène-Jean Damery, *Oedipus and Antigone*, 1843, oil on canvas, École des Beaux-Arts