

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Charles-Théodore Frère
(Paris 1814 – 1888)

Sunset on the Nile

Signed and dated lower right: *TH. FRÈRE. / 15 AOUT 1875*

Watercolour on paper
12.5 x 22 cm.

Provenance:
Private Collection, France, until 2024.



Dazzling Nile sunsets were a subject of predilection for Charles-Théodore Frère (fig. 1), the most talented of the French Orientalist landscapists. This small watercolour from August 1875 is a particularly beautiful example. Backlit by a hazy dusky sky of yellow, orange and purple hues, a train of camels descend with their drovers to the water's edge, to meet a group of women and two small dhows. Palm trees on the far bank provide a backdrop and frame the composition, and a flock of birds wheel overhead. Despite all being rendered in silhouette, the watercolour has a definite feeling of depth and recession.



Fig. 1, Charles-Théodore Frère, *Sunset on the Nile*, oil on canvas, 113 x 183 cm, Private Collection

Frère first became fascinated by the 'Orient' during a lengthy stay in Algeria from 1836 to 1839. On his return to Paris he exhibited two views of Algiers at the Salon. From 1851 to 1854 Frère travelled through Egypt, Greece, Turkey and the Near East. Of all these regions, it was Egypt which spoke to the artist above all, so much so that in 1853 Frère established a studio in Cairo. Favoured by members of the Egyptian government, Frère was awarded the honorific title of '*bey*'. After multiple journeys, Frère visited Egypt for the final time in 1869 to witness the opening of the Suez Canal.

From 1839 to 1887 Frère exhibited over one hundred and twenty North African, Egyptian and Near Eastern landscapes, becoming one of the most prolific and influential of the Orientalist painters of his day. Notable for their vivid and luminous palette, Frère's works were immensely popular with European collectors of the 19th century. He was lauded by artists and critics too, praised by Claude Monet and Théophile Gautier alike.