

EUGÈNE DELACROIX

EUGENE DELACROIX IS TODAY WIDELY KNOWN AS THE LEADER OF THE FRENCH ROMANTIC SCHOOL. HE LEFT US FABULOUS ORIENTALIST WORKS, PAINTED WITH EXPRESSIVE BRUSHSTROKES, STRIKING COLOURS AND VERVE.

By Judith Wich-Wenning



Delacroix' mother descended from a family of famous cabinetmakers. There is a reason to believe that her husband Charles Delacroix was not Eugène's natural father. In fact, it is today generally accepted that Eugène Delacroix was the son of the supreme diplomat and "grey eminence" Talleyrand. He was a friend of the family and a successor to Charles Delacroix the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Talleyrand protected Eugène Delacroix throughout his career.

Like Théodore Géricault, Eugène Delacroix was trained in the atelier of Guérin. Delacroix was a friend and later on the spiritual heir of Théodore Géricault. When Delacroix started to read books and literature about the Near East, he became interested in exotic subjects. He developed a passion for Lord Byron's writings which inspired him in some of his works.

In 1832, Delacroix travelled to Spain, Morocco and Algiers as part of a diplomatic mission. This journey had enormous influence on his artistic career. Delacroix was entranced by the sizzling colours, the bright light, the people and costumes.

Throughout his stay in the East he produced pencil and watercolour sketches in 7 small notebooks. They provided him with an inexhaustible source of material for the following decades. The exotic, imaginary and sumptuous orient haunted him for the rest of his life. Delacroix' oeuvre comprises impressive horse paintings as for example "Mameluke on Horseback", "Combat of the Giaour and the Pasha" and "Turk with Harness".

Only later in his life, Delacroix' orientalist pictures were less and less realistic as his memories and impressions faded.

Delacroix' probably best known painting is however not orientalist: the unforgettable "Liberty Leading the People". It represents the values of the French revolution: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Today this huge painting is visible in the Louvre Museum.

Eugène Delacroix was also a fine lithographer and created powerful works of art in this field. In his paintings, he put the emphasis on colours and movements instead of clarity of outline.

Despite his often-fragile health, Delacroix possessed immense vitality and creative power. Delacroix lived in seclusion and devoted himself entirely to his only passion: ART.

The extent of Delacroix' oeuvre is enormous: he left 853 oil paintings, 1525 pastels and watercolours and beyond that, literary works as for example art essays, correspondence over almost four decades and his famous diary.

Eugène Delacroix died in 1863 after suffering from chronic laryngitis since many years. He was buried in Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. His former atelier in Saint-Germain-des-Près in Paris has been turned into an important museum and attracts today numerous tourists from all over the world.

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