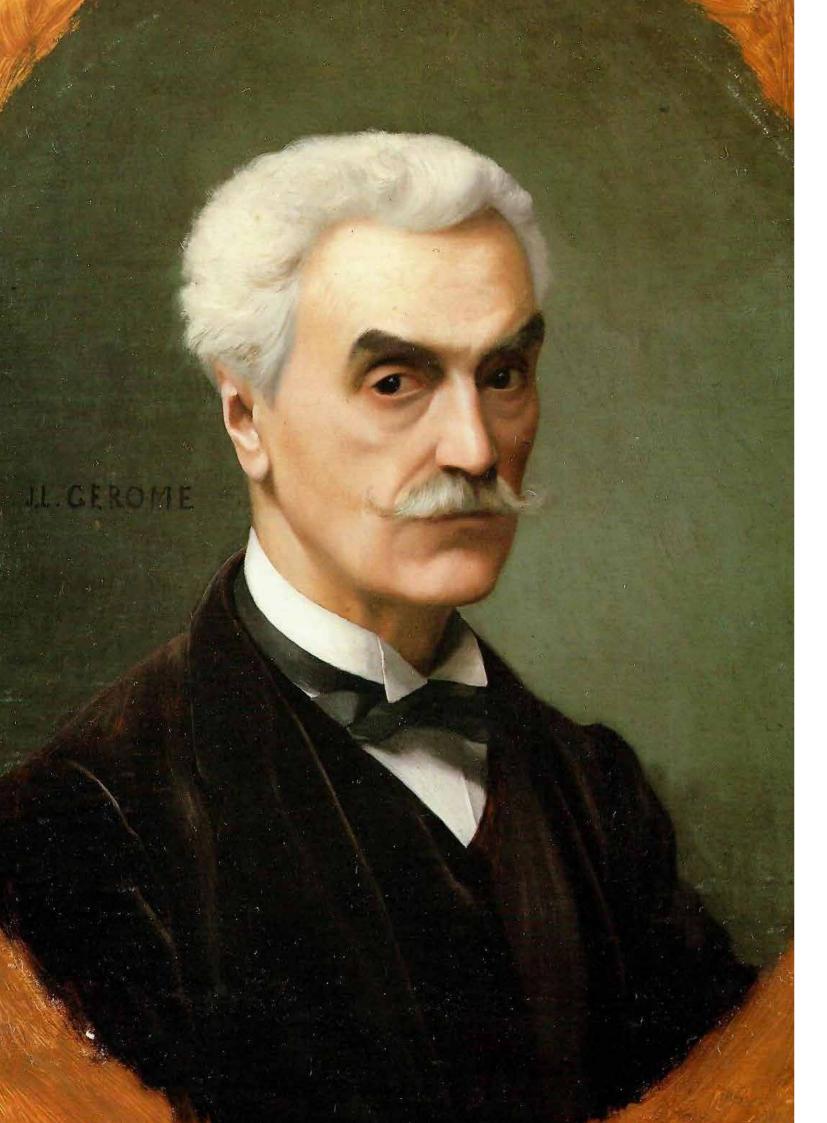


Four Orientalist Masterpieces by

Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824 - 1904)

DICKINSON



Introduction

At TEFAF Maastricht 2019 Dickinson is delighted to present as stand highlights four masterpieces by Jean-Léon Gérôme, one of the leading figures in the 19th century Orientalist movement. Using a combination of sketches made on the spot, early travel photography, memory and a vivid imagination, Gérôme painted some of the most alluring and spellbinding images of 'The Orient' ever produced for Western audiences. Above all, Gérôme is remembered for his depictions of bathers, of which *Les Baigneuses du Harem, Le Bain Maure (Moorish Bath), La Grande Piscine à Brusa (The Grand Bath at Bursa)*, and *La Terrasse du Sérail (Terrace of the Seraglio)* are prime examples.

Respected and honoured in his own era, Gérôme contributed to the French Academic tradition both as artist and as professor. At age fifteen Gérôme was sent to Paris to the atelier of Paul Delaroche, and in 1843 he accompanied his teacher to spend a year in Rome sketching classical antiquities. After returning to Paris, Gérôme applied for but failed to win the Prix de Rome in 1846, ironically due to inadequate figure drawing. His entry into the *Salon* of 1847, however – *Un combat de coqs (The Cock Fight)* – earned him a third-class medal. The following year, Gérôme won a second-class medal, and his reputation continued to rise as he was awarded a series of prestigious commissions.

fig. 1: J.-L. Gérôme, Self-Portrait, 1886, oil on canvas, 40.6 x 30.5 cm, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Scotland

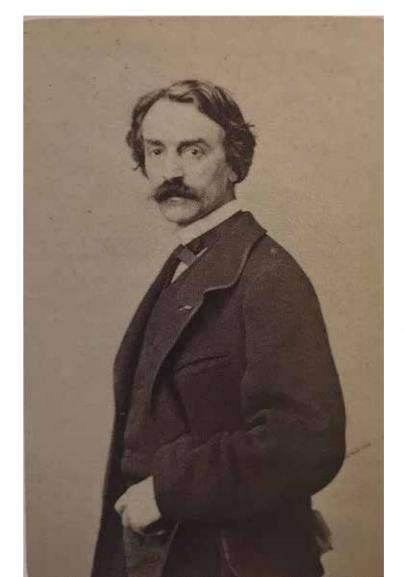
Gérôme and Orientalism

Orientalism is generally considered a branch of French Academic painting, and together with Eugène Delacroix and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (fig. 3), Gérôme is remembered as one of the leading figures in the movement. More than two thirds of his *oeuvre* is dedicated to depictions of the Orient, seen through a Western lens as an exotic, mysterious, alluring and often dangerous place. And while Western attitudes towards the Middle East, Asia and North Africa were often patronising or even paternalistic, Gérôme's own opinions were sympathetic, albeit tempered with a fair degree of artistic licence.

In 1852, having obtained a government commission for a large-scale Augustan allegory - an Imperial theme designed to flatter Napoleon III - for the forthcoming 1855 World's Fair, Gérôme set off for Eastern Europe in search of models and inspiration. He travelled along the Danube through the Balkans to Constantinople, sketching as he went. Although brief, the trip sparked a lifelong interest in the culture and society of the Middle East and Orient, and in 1856 he organised a second, much longer trip: eight months in Egypt. He was to make a further half dozen trips to the region over the course of his life (in 1862, 1868, 1869, 1871, 1874 and 1880). On this, his first trip, Gérôme travelled in the company of two other painters, Léon Charles Bailly and Narcisse Berchère, and a sculptor and photographer, Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi, who brought with him equipment to take and develop photographs (fig. 4).

fig. 2: Neurdein brothers, Gérôme, c. 1900, albumen print, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

fig. 3: J.-A.-D. Ingres, *The Turkish Bath*, c. 1852-62, oil
on canvas, 108 x 110 cm,
Musée du Louvre, Paris

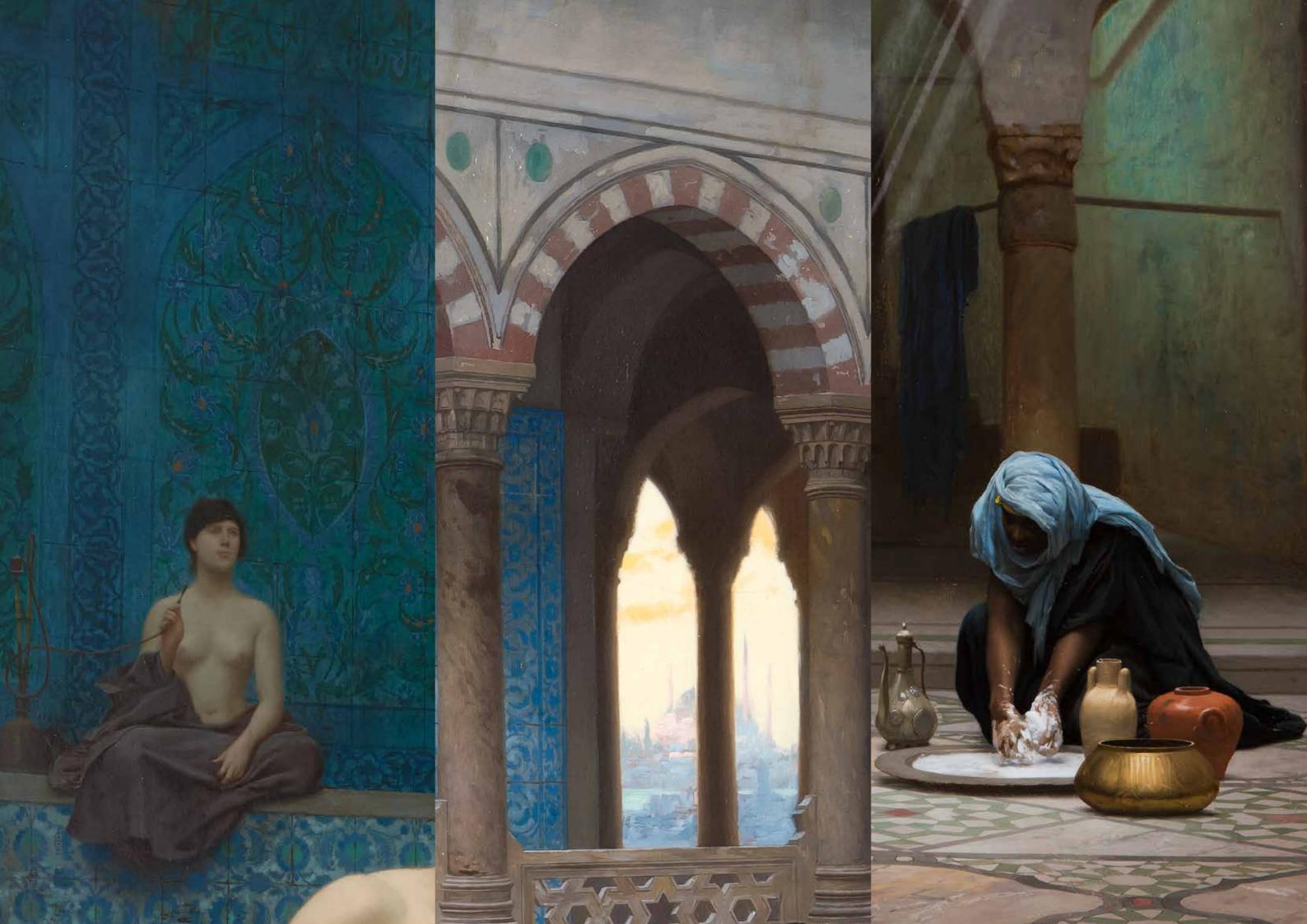


'My short stay in Constantinople had whetted my appetite and the Orient was my most frequent dream...'

Gérôme to Charles Timbal 1878)



Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 7.







From the outset, and as evidenced by his drawings and sketches, Gérôme was far more interested in contemporary Egyptian life than in that of Ancient Egypt (fig. 5). He soon began collecting textiles, costumes, weaponry, and other props to keep in his studio for reference in his compositions (fig. 6). Gérôme exhibited Orientalist works for the first time at the 1869 Paris *Salon*, when he showed four pictures to an enthusiastic audience. Additional travels to Egypt followed, as did marriage to Marie Goupil, daughter of his dealer Adolphe. Gérôme's new brother-in-law, Albert, an enthusiastic amateur photographer, began accompanying him on his tours.

In the winter of 1871, sixteen years after his first visit to the region, Gérôme returned to Constantinople. He visited again in 1875, this time staying with the Sultan's own painter, Abdullah Siriez, and yet again in 1879. It was during these trips that Gérôme had the opportunity to make the sketches that would serve as the basis for some of his most popular Orientalist paintings of the 1870s and 1880s: those featuring mysterious harems and exotic bathers. Although Gérôme was not permitted to visit the more private and secluded areas of the Royal Palace, he was free to visit the Baths, and to sketch at monuments such as the Green Mausoleum of Mehemet I. In 1879 Gérôme went a step further in pursuit of the ideal composition: 'During a stay in Bursa, I was taken

by the architecture of the baths, and they certainly offered a chance to study nudes. It wasn't just a question of going to see what was going on inside, and of replacing [some men by some women], I had to have a sketch of this interior; and since the temperature inside was rather high, I didn't hesitate to sketch in the simple apparel of a beauty just aroused from her sleep – that is, in the buff. Sitting on my tripod, my paint box on my knees, my palette in my hand, I was a little grotesque, but you have to know how to adapt yourself as necessary. I had the idea of painting my portrait in this costume, but I dropped it, fearing that my image (*dal vero*) might get me too much attraction and launch me in a career as a Don Juan' (quoted in F. Masson, J-L Gérôme, 'Notes et fragments des souvenirs inédits du maître', Les Arts, Paris, 1902, p. 30).

In 1893 Gérôme was named honorary president of the newly established *Société des Peintres Orientalistes Français*, which was formed to promote Orientalist painting and the travel of French artists to the Middle and Far East. Gérôme's position at the apex of the Orientalist movement was clear, and his reputation remained intact even as Modernism surpassed Academicism in the international spotlight.

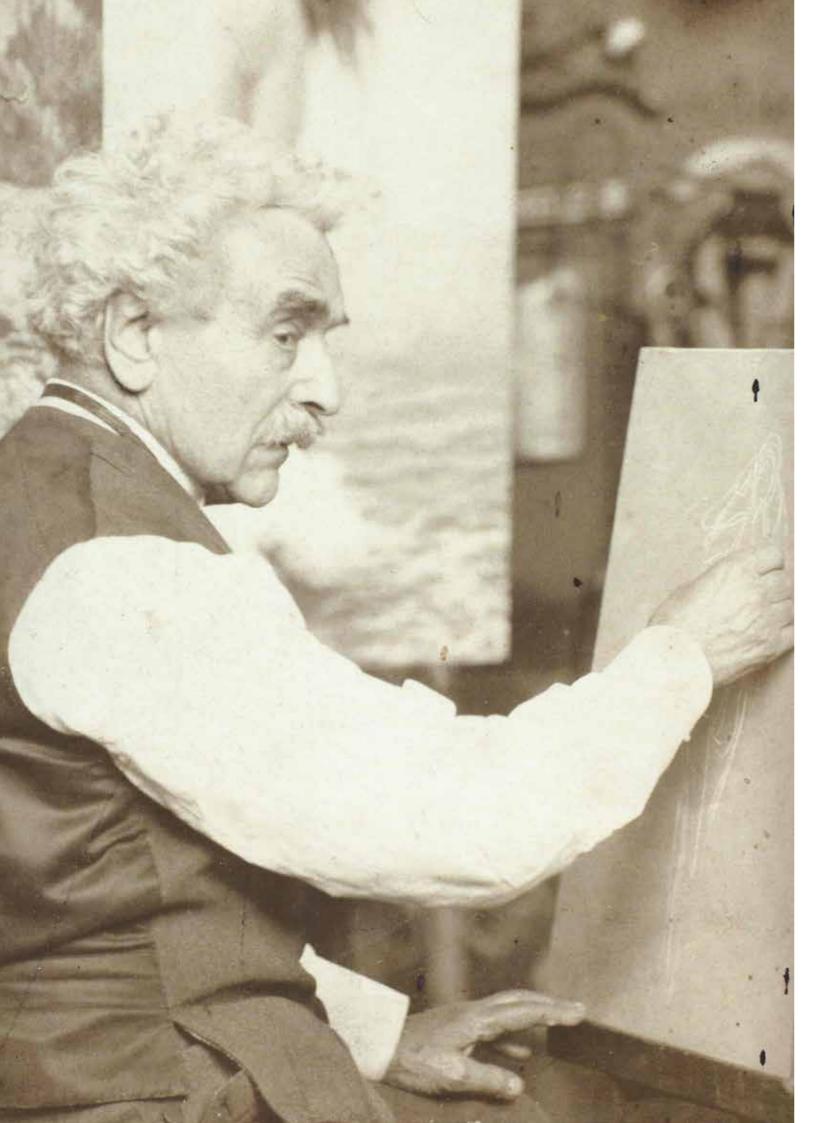
fig. 4: A. Bartholdi, *Bartholdi* and Gérôme, 1856, salt print, Musée Bartholdi, Colmar

fig. 5: A. Goupil, *Two Arab Escorts*, 1868, albumen
print, Bibliothèque Nationale
de France, Paris

fig. 6: Gérôme in his studio, c. 1904 (photographer unknown)



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'The interpretation – healthy, strong and true – of Nature is the only path that leads to masterpieces...'

(Gérôme)

Gérôme and Technique

Gérôme was taught, and in turn taught his pupils at the *Académie*, to imitate Nature – a philosophy that was completely at odds with the self-expressive aims of the Impressionists, whose work Gérôme found so objectionable. But even the notion of 'Nature' could mean, variously, the reality of the world around us or an idealised, more perfect version of our surroundings. For Gérôme, these two were often hard to separate.

We know a fair amount about Gérôme's studio practices thanks to early photographs, recollections from his students - more than 2000, over the course of four decades of teaching - and even Gérôme's own lectures, delivered at the Académie in a combination of technical instruction and inspiration. For instance, Gérôme fully developed each painting in his mind before he ever put brush to canvas. The staging of his compositions relied on a combination of sketches made on the spot, photography (a topic of discussion in its own right), hired models, costumes and decorative artefacts, and even architectural settings recreated in his Paris studio. In addition to his many preparatory drawings, Gérôme typically produced an oil sketch, or (less commonly) a full-scale cartoon, before embarking on a composition (figs. 8-11). The final paintings generally represent changes and improvements to the initial conception, and Gérôme's small studies were often inscribed and given as gifts to the artist's friends.

fig 7: Gérôme drawing in his studio, c. 1900, albumen print (photographer unknown)

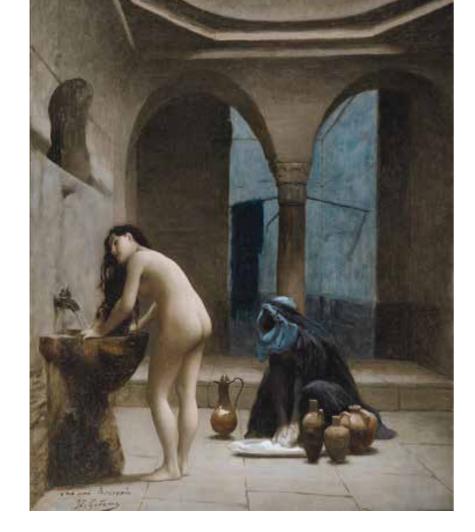


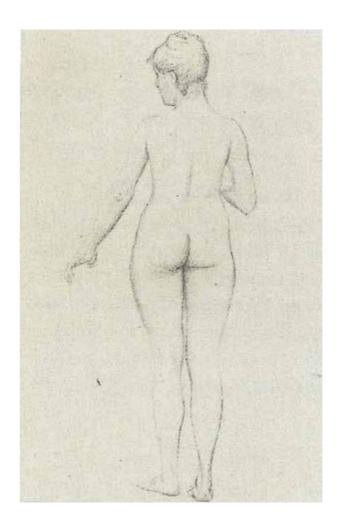


fig. 8: J.-L. Gérôme, Study for 'Le Bain Maure', c. 1870, black chalk on wove paper, 35.9 x 22.5 cm, RISD Museum, Providence, RI

fig. 9: J.-L. Gérôme, Study for 'Le Bain Maure', c. 1870, oil on canvas, 70.5 x 53.5 cm, Private Collection fig. 10: J.-L. Gérôme, *Sketch* for *Standing Nude*, c. 1885, pencil on paper, 32 x 20 cm, Private Collection

fig. 11: J.-L. Gérôme, *Grande Piscine à Brusa (The Grand Bath at Bursa)*, detail, c.
1885, oil on canvas, 70 x
96.5 cm, Private Collection

Evidence offered by unfinished paintings shows that Gérôme worked up the central figures to a high level of resolution before addressing the background. Even within a single figure he worked it out area by area rather than blocking in the larger regions of light and dark first and adding details later. Gérôme then added a final layer of thin glazes to complete and tie together the entire figure. We can see evidence of these working practices in photographs of the artist's studio as well as in extant unfinished canvases. Assistants were sometimes called upon to help fill in the background landscape or interior setting, although these elements were always enhanced and completed by the master himself. Gérôme preferred to varnish his paintings only after the oils were completely dry. Just before vanishing, however, Gérôme added a final layer of glazing to meld with the varnish and generate an overall sense of greater luminosity.





Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 15.



Gérôme and Photography

Gérôme's discovery of Egypt and the Middle East coincided with the birth of photography in France in the mid-19th century, and his art remained closely tied to the new artistic medium. Gérôme's companion on his first trip to Egypt 1857, Bartholdi - best known as the sculptor of the *Statue of Liberty* - brought with him not only a camera but also equipment for developing photographs, allowing him to produce early travel photography. At the time photographs had to be taken on large plate-glass negatives and developed immediately in a tent set up as a portable darkroom, so the effort - and expense - were considerable. It is probable that Gérôme retained some of these photographs for use later on (G. Ackerman, op. cit., p. 44). Gérôme continued to accumulate photographs as well as sketches during his travels, later relying on Albert Goupil to serve as photographer (figs. 12-14); it was Albert who accompanied Gérôme to Egypt in 1867 and to Asia Minor the following year. During his visit to Istanbul in 1875, Gérôme's host Abdullah Siriez arranged for photographs of the Palace interior to be taken for

Gérôme's benefit (G. Ackerman, *op. cit.*, p. 110; fig. 15).

The question of exactly how Gérôme used photography in his painting practice is one deserving of further attention. From the outset, artists and critics lauded its usefulness in capturing views much more quickly and accurately than sketches could. Gérôme's friend Théophile Gautier observed: 'Photography, carried to the perfection we all know, exempts artists from copying monuments and public buildings by its absolutely faithful prints, to which a happy choice of a point of view and moment of reproduction add a great authority of effect. Therefore it was not to this matter [of background] that Gérôme directed his efforts [on his trip to Egypt]' (quoted in G. Ackerman, op. cit., p. 44). And Jules Janin, writing in *L'Artiste*, compared photography favourably to sketching: '[Photography] is an obedient pencil, like an idea; it is a mirror that retains every impression; it is a faithful record of every building and every landscape in the world."







fig. 12: A. Goupil, *View of Cairo*, 1868, albumen print, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

fig. 13: A. Goupil, *Senoures*, 1868, albumen print, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

fig. 14: A. Goupil, *Giza*, 1868, albumen print, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

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fig. 15: Terrace of the Seraglio, Topkapi Palace, Istanbul

fig. 16: J.-L. Gérôme, La Terrasse du Sérail (Terrace of the Seraglio), 1886, oil on canvas, 82 x 122 cm, Private Collection The photographs relating to Gérôme's travels, many of them preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France or the Musée Bateau-Lavoir in Colmar, are sepia-toned views of expansive deserts, majestic pyramids, and palm trees, as well as portraits of the people they encountered. These provided Gérôme with a practical record of the many new sights he encountered on his trip and served, alongside his sketches, as invaluable tools back in his Parisian studio.

It would nevertheless be inaccurate to assume that, because they often relied on photographic aids, Gérôme's paintings were always topographically faithful records of his travels. In his contribution to the catalogue of the 2010 Gérôme exhibition in Paris, Madrid and Los Angeles, Louvre curator Dominique de Font-Réaulx explained that Gérôme's paintings

were in fact full of artifice, pointing out that he used photographs as tools rather than templates, and modified them as he saw fit. At the same time, he was able to capitalise on the perceived truthfulness of photography: rather than distancing himself from the new medium, he let it be known that he travelled with a photographer in his entourage, as this information – combined with the high level of detail in his paintings - suggested an accurate, 'eyewitness' account of the Orient. In reality, Gérôme's Orient was a Western creation, a confirmation of the imagined culture his Western viewers expected to see. In addition to helping to perpetuate this notion of an exotic, mysterious East, photography facilitated the dissemination of Gérôme's work, enhancing his reputation and status as a leading figure at the Académie (figs. 17-18).



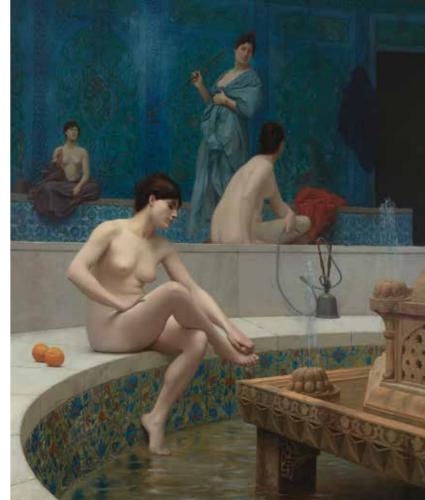
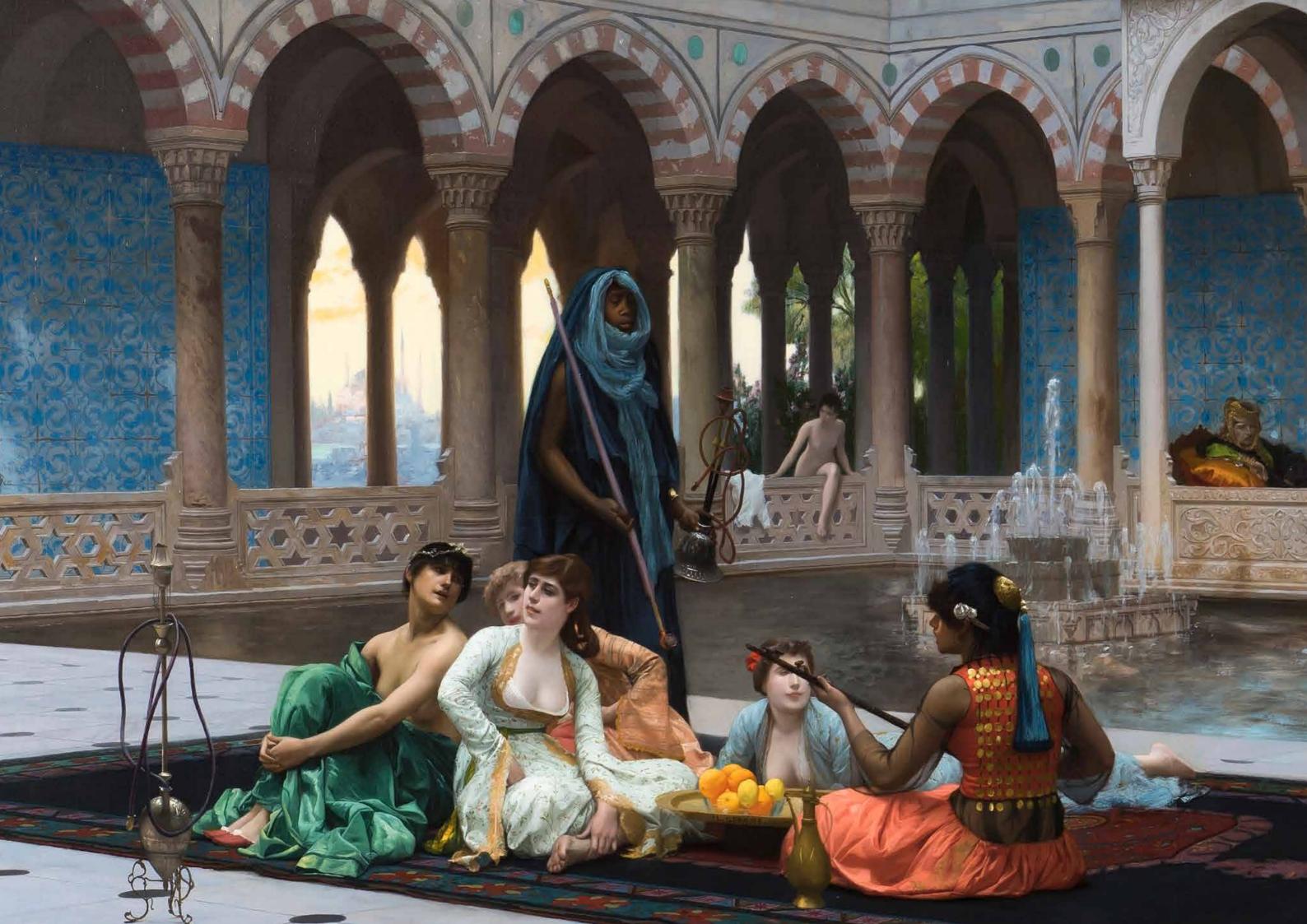


fig. 17: P. Sebah, The Baths of Yénir-Kaplidja, Bursa, 1894, albumen print, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris

fig. 18: J.-L. Gérôme, Les Baigneuses du Harem (The Harem Pool), c. 1889/1901, oil on canvas, 99.7 x 80.6 cm, Private Collection

20. DICKINSON Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 21.



Gérôme and Goupil

The close – ultimately familial – relationship between Gérôme and his dealer Adolphe Goupil (fig. 19) was the subject of a dedicated exhibition in 2000-01, Gérôme & Goupil: Art and Enterprise (held at the Musée Goupil, Bordeaux; The Dahesh Museum of Art, New York; and The Frick Art & Historical Center, Pittsburgh). Trained as a publisher, Goupil originally entered into a partnership with the printseller Henry Rittner with the aim of reproducing and distributing artists' work; he did not begin to buy and sell paintings and drawings until 1846. By that point, Goupil had already formed a close relationship with Paul Delaroche, Gérôme's teacher, whose work he engraved throughout the 1830s. Goupil and Gérôme began their nearly four-decade-long relationship in 1856, when Goupil purchased six paintings from Gérôme with the intention of reproducing them as engravings (fig. 20), publicising them and selling them. From the outset, Goupil took responsibility for framing the paintings he bought, deducting their cost from the gross sale price before splitting the net profits with Gérôme and recording everything in his meticulous account books (fig. 21). Works retaining their original 'Goupil frames' - including *Bain Maure* - are especially desirable among collectors. In 1863, the relationship between Gérôme and Goupil became even

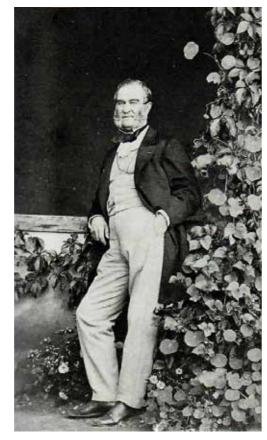
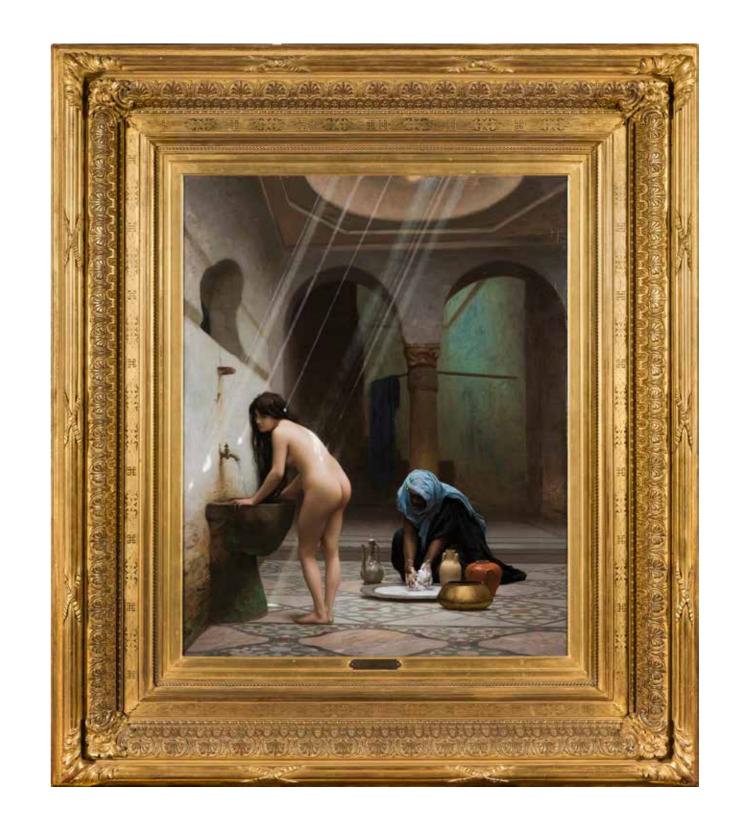




fig. 19: Goupil Atelier, Portrait of Adolphe Goupil, photographic proof on albumen paper, Private Collection

fig. 20: Goupil & Cie, *Grande Piscine à Brusa* (*The Grand Bath at Bursa*), c. 1885, engraving

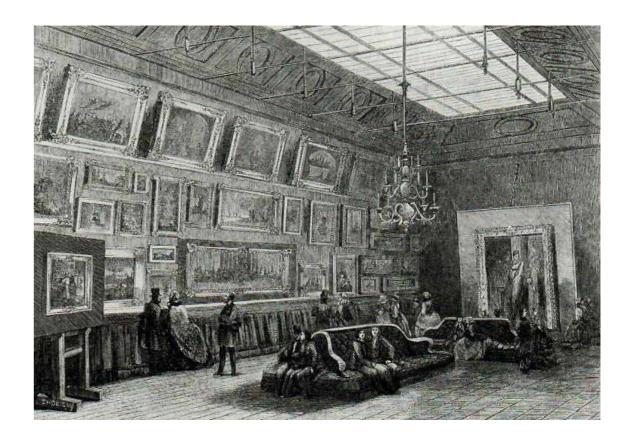
fig. 21: J.-L. Gérôme, *Le Bain Maure (The Moorish Bath)*, c. 1874-77, oil on canvas in its original Goupil frame, 81.5 x 65.5 cm, (framed: 125 x 108 cm), Private Collection

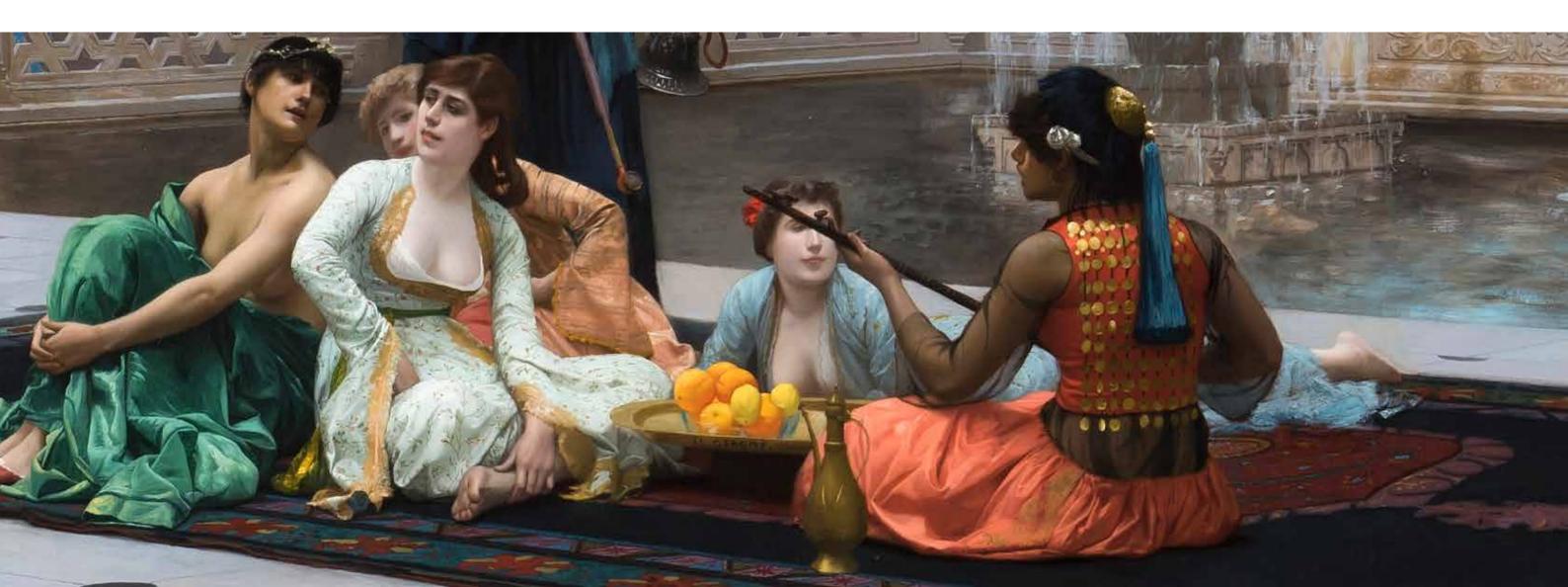


24. DICKINSON Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 25

closer when the artist married Goupil's 21-year-old daughter Marie and began travelling with his new brother-in-law Albert, a photographer. Photography became increasingly relevant to the gallery, too, after the decision to move from engraved to photographic reproduction methods in 1853. By the end of Gérôme's career, Goupil's gallery had sold a total of 337 paintings (in 430 transactions, with some of them traded multiply), over half of the artist's lifetime output, and reproduced 122 paintings (in 370 editions). As noted in the 2000 exhibition catalogue, the 'symbiotic' relationship between artist and dealer-publisher was taken to a new level – if not entirely reinvented – by Adolphe Goupil.

fig. 22: The Goupil Gallery with Gérôme's 'Rachel' (exh. 1859 Salon), far right, woodcut, published in Le Monde illustré, 12 May 1860





The Legacy of Gérôme

By the time he died, aged 80, on 10 January 1904, Gérôme was a widely respected Academician with a reputation that spanned the Atlantic, as well as a very rich man (fig. 23). He had been made a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour (the highest rank in the Order), Professor of the École des Beaux-Arts, and an honourary member of The Royal Academy in London, among others. Yet he was as staunch an opponent of Modern art as he was a dedicated and enthusiastic supporter of the younger generation of Academic painters: in 1894, he attempted to prevent the French government from accepting Gustave Caillebotte's bequest of Impressionist paintings to the nation, and in 1903 he tried to dissuade the Amis du Luxembourg from arranging an exhibition of paintings by Manet, Monet, Pissarro and other

Impressionists at the museum. Having opposed an exhibition of paintings by Manet in 1884, Gérôme reluctantly visited the show, begrudgingly conceding: 'They're not as bad as I'd feared'. Gérôme and the Orientalists fell out of fashion in the late 19th and early part of the 20th century, but more recently the movement has gained strength in the commercial market and inspired a number of international exhibitions. In 2010, Gérôme was honoured with a dedicated exhibition staged at The J. Paul Getty Museum, The Musée d'Orsay and The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza – the first such retrospective in forty years. The best examples of Gérôme's work continue to be in demand as icons of the Orientalist movement, a unique and influential period in European art.



fig. 23: Gérôme in the uniform of a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, 1900 (photographer unknown)

fig. 24: Dornac, Portrait of Jean-Léon Gérôme in his studio, c. 1900-04, photograph, Archives Larousse, Paris

fig. 25: Gérôme, 66 years old, in the atelier of his house on the Boulevard de Clichy, c. 1890 (photographer unknown)





28. DICKINSON Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 29.



Le Bain Maure (Moorish Bath)

1870-74

signed lower left J.L. GEROME

oil on canvas

81.5 x 65.5 cm. (32 x 25 ²/₃ in.)

PROVENANCE:

Goupil et Cie, Paris (Stock Book VIII, no. 11731).

Cobourg, acquired from the above on 27 Feb. 1877 (20,000 ffr.)

Anon. Sale; Christie's, London, 26 June 1987, lot 74 (sold for £150, 000).

Anon. Sale; Christie's, London, 21 Nov. 1996, lot 242 (sold for £892,500).

Private Collection, UK, acquired at the above sale.

LITERATURE:

A. Arago, Oeuvres choicies de J.L. Gérôme..., Notice biographique, Paris, 1878, no. 122.

E. Strahan, *Gérôme, A Collection of the Works of J.L. Gérôme in one Hundred Photogravures*, New York, 1881, vol. I, p. 27 (illus. and titled 'Moorish Bath').

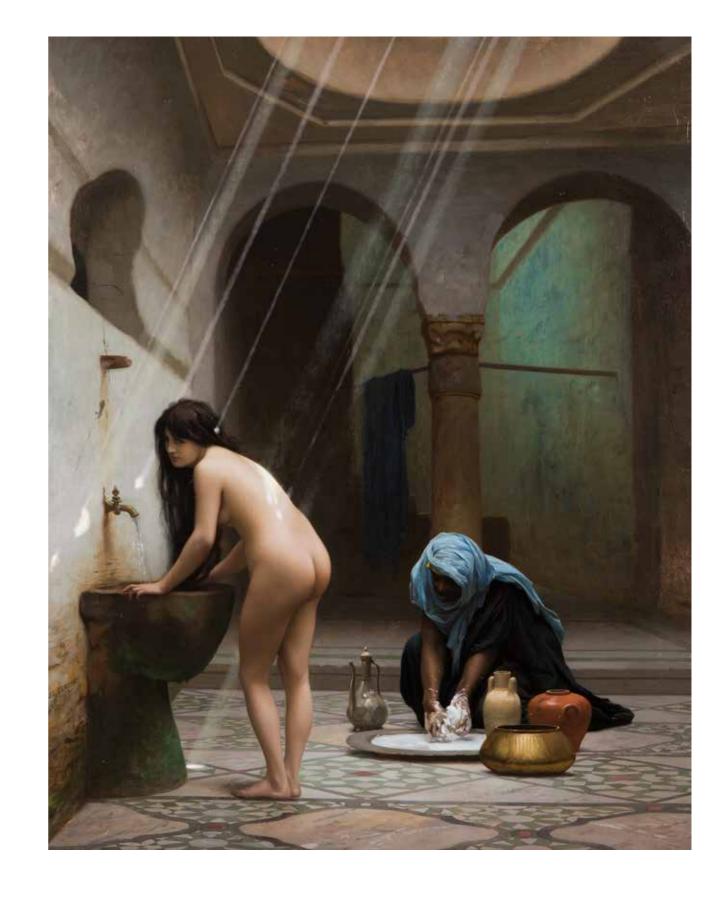
G. Ackerman, *The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme, with a catalogue raisonné*, London and New York, 1986 (republished 1992, 2000), p. 236, no. 240 (illus. p. 237, titled 'Moorish Bath, no 2 – Un Bain Maure [Femme turque au bain]').

H. Lafont-Couturier, *Gérôme et Goupil: Art et Enterprise*, exh. cat., Musée Goupil, Bordeaux; Dahesh Museum of Art, New York; and The Frick Art & Historical Center, Pittsburgh, 2000, p. 136, no. 95 (engraving illus.)

ENGRAVED:

Goupil et Cie, Paris, published 1878.

Samuel L. Hall, New York, 1881 (photogravure titled 'Le Bain Maure').



32. DICKINSON Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 33.

By the time Jean-Léon Gérôme painted *Le Bain Maure* and other Orientalist scenes, the genre of the Turkish bath had already been well-established. One of the most widely-influential and successful academic painters of the 19th century, Gérôme first visited the East in 1853, when he travelled to Constantinople. He returned to Turkey the following year, visiting Greece as well, and in 1856 Gérôme reached Egypt for the first time, continuing onward across the Sinai Peninsula to the Holy Land. It was this trip that first ignited his enduring fascination with exoticism and Arab genre scenes.

Gérôme had already made an intense study of the human form when he trained as a sculptor, and his nudes are less lascivious yet no less sensual than the *odalisques* painted by Ingres. His bathers, many of them female, populate interior spaces to which Gérôme himself could never have been granted access - but his habit of sketching constantly, in pencil as well as in oil, during his travels, contributed to the sense of authenticity in his interior and exterior settings. The artist later recalled this practice, observing that 'even when worn out after long marches under the bright sun, as soon as our camping spot was reached I got down to work with concentration. But Oh! How many thing were left behind of which I carried only the memory away! And I prefer three touches of colour on a piece of canvas to the most vivid memory, but one had to continue on with some regret.'

In this composition, a dark-haired nude bather, apparently interrupted at her toilette, glances coyly over her left shoulder. On the elaborately tiled floor next to her, a Nubian servant is preparing a palm oil scrub. Rays of light stream through the small windows of the domed roof, highlighting the bather's hair and back, and striking the wall. The relatively small space and absence of other bathers suggests that she is in a private bathing complex rather than a public one.

There are a number of studies for this composition, as was typical of Gérôme's intellectual working practice, including pencil drawings of the standing bather and fountain (fig. 1) and several studies in oil (fig. 2). In comparison to his precise and highly finished paintings for exhibition, Gérôme's sketches and oil studies were more spontaneous, lacking such details as the rays of sunlight and the patterned floor tiles.

This painting is recorded in the stock books of Gérôme's long-term dealer Adolphe Goupil, whose daughter, Marie, became Gérôme's wife. It retains its original Goupil frame.





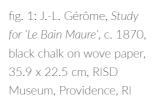
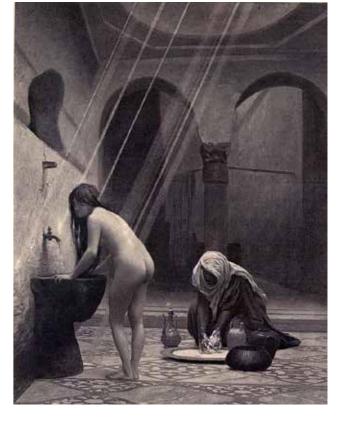


fig. 2: J.-L. Gérôme, Study for 'Le Bain Maure', c. 1874, oil on canvas, 50.5 x 40.5 cm, Private Collection

fig. 3: Goupil et Cie, photogravure of *Le Bain Maure* (titled *Moorish Bath*), Goupil et Cie, publ. 1878



34. DICKINSON Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 35.

La Grande Piscine à Brusa (The Grand Bath at Bursa)

1885

signed lower centre J.L.GEROME

oil on canvas

70 x 100.5 cm. (27 ½ x 39 ½ in.)

PROVENANCE:

Boussod, Valadon & Cie, Paris, 10 Oct. 1885 (Stock Book XI, no. 17584; titled 'Grande Piscine de Brousse').

Tsar Alexander III (1845 – 1894), acquired from the above on 10 Oct. 1885 (34,500 ffr), probably for the Gatchina Palace, St. Petersburg.

Confiscated from the Russian Imperial family by Soviet authorities following the Revolution.

(Probably) Dr. Armand Hammer, acquired from the Soviet government circa 1930.

Anon. sale; Kende Galleries at Gimbel Brothers, New York, 19 Feb. 1943, lot 34 (\$1,000).

Judge Paul H. Buchanan, Indianapolis, IN, acquired in 1981 (\$165,000).

Private Collection, acquired from the above in 1989.

Their sale; Sotheby's, London, 15 June 2004, lot 112 (£1,909,600).

Private Collection, UK, acquired at the above sale

LITERATURE:

The New York Times, 4 April 1885.

E. Strahan, Gérôme, A Collection of the Works of J.L. Gérôme in one Hundred Photogravures, New York, 1881.

The Athenæum Journal, London, Jan. - June 1885, no. 3004 (23 May 1885), p. 668.

Figaro-Salon, Paris, 1885, no. 2, p. 39 (illus. p. 40 in engraving).

H. Havard, Salon de 1885, Paris, 1885, n.n. (illus. in engraving, fig. 2).

F. Field Hering, Gérôme: The Life and Works of Jean-Léon Gérôme, New York, 1892, p. 247.

J.L. Gérôme, 'Notes et fragments des souvenirs inédits du maître', Les Arts, Paris, 1904, p. 30.

G. Cugnier and G. Ackerman, *J.L. Gérôme*, exh. cat., Musée Garret, Vesoul, 1981, p. 25 (illus., titled 'Femmes au bain' and dated 1876).

L. Thornton, Women as Portrayed in Orientalist Painting, Paris, 1985, p. 69.

G. Ackerman, 'Gérôme's Oriental Paintings and the Western Genre Tradition', *Arts Magazine*, New York, March 1986, pp. 75-80.

G. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme, with a catalogue raisonné*, London and New York, 1986 (republished 1992, 2000), p. 256, no. 334 (illus. p. 257.)



G.-G. Lemaire, The Orient in Western Art, Cologne, 2001, p. 242.

L. de Cars, D. de Font-Reaulx and E. Papet, *Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824 – 1904): L'Histoire en Spectacle*, exh. cat., J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; and Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, 2010, pp. 286-89, no. 167 (illus. pp. 188-89).

EXHIBITED:

Paris, Palais des Champs-Elysées, *Salon de 1885*, May 1885, no. 1087 (titled 'Grande Piscine de Brusse').

Indianapolis, IN, Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1980s, on loan from Judge Paul H. Buchanan.

Los Angeles, CA, The J. Paul Getty Museum, *Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824 – 1904): L'Histoire en Spectacle*, 15 June – 12 Sept. 2010, no. 167; this exhibition then travelled to Paris, Musée d'Orsay, 19 Oct. 2010 – 23 Jan. 2011; and Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 1 March – 22 May 2011.

ENGRAVED:

Goupil et Cie, Paris, c. 1885 (titled 'Grand Bath at Broussa').

36. DICKINSON Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 37.

A decade after his first trip to Turkey in 1875, Jean-Léon Gérôme painted the most celebrated of his bath scenes, *La Grande Piscine à Brusa*. When it was exhibited at the 1885 Paris *Salon*, recalled scholar Fanny Field Hering in her 1982 monograph of Gérôme's work, it 'aroused the most enthusiastic admiration'. Hering declared it 'probably the most remarkable of his pictures in this genre' (F.F. Hering, *op. cit.*, p. 247). The London *Athenæum* agreed, reporting that 'this young bather [the central nude seen from the rear] is one of the best figures M. Gérôme has ever painted, so clear, firm, elastic, and rosy. It is exquisitely drawn and modelled with the utmost choiceness, refinement, and research.'

The splendid octagonal pool is set underneath the great dome of the *caldarium* in *Yeni Kaplica*, the 'New Baths' of Bursa, constructed in 1552 according to designs possibly by the master builder Sinan. Bursa had been the ancient capital of the Ottoman Empire before the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. By 1885, when he executed this painting, Gérôme had moved away from the heroic history subjects that had interested him earlier in his career

Ackerman believes that Gérôme's idea for this composition was inspired by his 1879 visit to Bursa, when he sketched some of the older monuments such as the Green Mausoleum of Mehemet I. He is also known to have documented the interior of the New Baths in an oil sketch that has since been lost.

The artist's friend Frédéric Masson records an account by Gérôme of this experience: 'During a stay in Bursa, I was taken by the architecture of the baths, and they certainly offered a chance to study nudes. It wasn't just a question of going to see what was going on inside, and of replacing [some men by some women], I had to have a sketch of this interior; and since the temperature inside was rather high, I didn't hesitate to sketch in the simple apparel of a beauty just aroused from her sleep – that is, in the buff. Sitting on my tripod, my paint box on my

knees, my palette in my hand, I was a little grotesque, but you have to know how to adapt yourself as necessary. I had the idea of painting my portrait in this costume, but I dropped it, fearing that my image (dal vero) might get me too much attraction and launch me in a career as a Don Juan' (quoted in F. Masson, *op. cit.*, p. 30)

The subject of *La Grande Piscine* was not uncommon in 19th Century painting; artists including Delacroix, Ingres and Chassériau had already received critical acclaim for their nudes set in Turkish interiors. Gérôme's nudes are less lascivious yet no less sensual than the *odalisques* and bathers painted by Ingres, for instance in his famous *Le Bain Turc* of 1862.

It seems likely that Gérôme, working in the bath on Men's Day, naturally, observed the casual society of the male bathers in order to imagine an interior populated by female bathers. Some of the women in his composition stand conversing with one another or stroll about, while others soak in the pool or sit on the edge to dangle their feet in the water.

Central to the composition is the pair of mistress and servant standing in the foreground with their backs to the viewer. The former is nude while the latter is fully clothed, but both wear ornate *pattens*, a type of sandal, to avoid slipping on the slick surfaces of the wet tiles.

Gérôme's nudes of the 1880s benefited from the intense study that accompanied his foray into sculpture in the late 1870s, and he appears to have made studies for the important figures in this composition (see fig. 1). Although Gérôme sketched the interior of the baths in detail while in Bursa, his studies of the female nudes, like the finished painting, would have been executed back in his Paris studio. He may also have relied on photographs of the interior of the baths.

In his analysis of La Grande Piscine à Brusa, Ackerman remarks: 'None of the other bath scenes by Gérôme seem to be based on such objective thought and observation; the baths in most of them are - as was proper for the genre - usually hot houses of licentious longing and fantasy but not of activity, for they are male bereft. In fact, when Tsar Alexander III bought this picture from Gérôme, he already owned another bath scene that was in the traditional bath scene genre – that is, deliberately lascivious, Femmes au Bain'. Ackerman continues: 'Although Gérôme's Oriental bathing scenes are among the most popular and famous of his subjects, they actually number together fewer than thirty paintings – that is, less than half of one percent of his *oeuvre*. Of all these often splendid bathing scenes, La Grande Piscine à Brusa is the largest, the best composed, the most intelligently arranged, the most interesting, or, in sum, the most wonderful.'

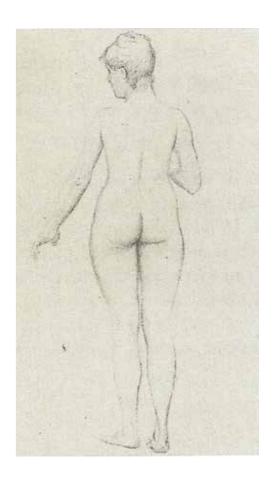






fig. 2. P.P. Zabolotsky, *Tsar*Alexander III, 1889, oil on
canvas, (measurements
unknown), The State Russian
Museum, St. Petersburg

fig. 3. Goupil et Cie, engraving of *La Grande Piscina à Brusa* (titled 'Grand Bath at Broussa'), c. 1885

fig. 4: Goupil & Cie stockbook with *Grande Piscine à Brusa*, line 3



Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 39.

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La Terrasse du Sérail (Terrace of the Seraglio)

1886

signed lower centre J.L. GEROME

oil on canvas

82 x 122 cm. (32 x 48 in.)

PROVENANCE:

Mr Elbridge T. Gerry, New York, commissioned directly from the artist, 1886 (delivered by Goupil Galleries, New York); and by desent to

Mabel Gerry Drury, New York.

Her Sale; American Art Association, New York, 3 Dec. 1936, lot 62.

Frances E. Quigley, CA.

J.P. Fritz, USA.

William Randolph Hearst, San Simeon, CA.

Louis Kaplan, New York.

Finch College Museum, New York, by bequest from the above.

Charles Jerdein Ltd., London, acquired from the above in 1972.

Private Collection, acquired from the above in 1973.

Their Sale; Christie's, New York, 11 Nov. 1998, lot 134 (sold for \$1,322,500).

Private Collection, UK, acquired at the above sale.

LITERATURE:

Bibliothèque Nationale, Oeuvres de Jean-Léon Gérôme, Paris, vol. V, p. 7.

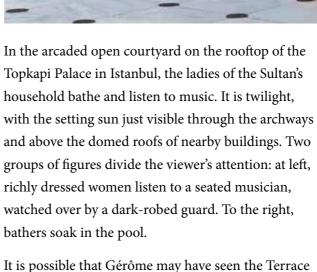
F. Field Hering, *Gérôme: The Life and Works of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, New York, 1892, p.255.

G. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme, with a catalogue raisonne*, London and New York, 1986 (republished 1992, 2000), p. 258, no. 339 (illus. p. 259).

L. de Cars, D. de Font-Reaulx and E. Papet, *Jean-Léon Gérôme* (1824 – 1904): *L'Histoire en Spectacle*, exh. cat., J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; and Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, 2010, pp. 263-64 (illus. fig. 125).



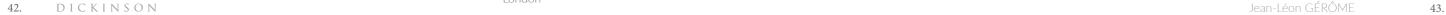
fig. 1: J.-L. Gérôme, Study of a girl playing a stringed instrument, c. 1886, black crayon on paper, 28.3 x 23.4 cm., British Museum, London



It is possible that Gérôme may have seen the Terrace of the Palace, also called the Seraglio, first-hand during his travels to Istanbul, where he was the guest of the court painter Abdullah Siriez. More probably, as Ackerman has suggested, he painted it with the aid of photographs supplied by the Istanbul photography firm Abdullah Frères. The figures were based on studies of models posed in his Paris studio, dressed in costumes from his substantial collection (fig. 1). Decorative elements, such as the glimmering coins decorating the musician's vest, allowed him to demonstrate his skill for detail and luxurious effects. The prominently placed bowl of oranges next to the musician showcase a newly available pigment, cadmium orange.

In addition to drawing inspiration from Ingres' famous *The Turkish Bath* of 1862, Ackerman points out that the bather at far right, playfully scooping water to splash her companions, must have been inspired by the reliefs on Goujon's *Fountain of the Innocents* in Paris. The same relief also inspired Renoir around the same time, appearing in his *The Great Bathers* of 1884-87 (Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA).

The collector who originally commissioned the paintings from Gérôme, Elbridge Thomas 'Commodore' Gerry, was an American lawyer and grandson of U.S. Vice President Elbridge Gerry. In 1879, following the death of his uncle Peter Goelet, Gerry inherited the substantial sum of \$500,000. At his death in 1927, Gerry was believed to be one of New York City's wealthiest men, worth some \$26 million, mainly in landholdings. He is best known as one of the co-founders of The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.



Les Baigneuses du Harem

1901

signed lower left J.L. GEROME

oil on canvas

99.7 x 80.6 cm. (39 ½ x 31 ¾ in.)

PROVENANCE:

(Possibly) Boussod, Valadon & Cie, Paris, acquired directly from the artist, 1901.

Edward Brandus Inc., New York, acquired from the above in 1901 (6,600 ffr.)

Percy A. Rockerfeller (1878-1934), New York.

His Estate Sale; Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., New York, 20 Nov. 1947, lot 85.

Renaissance, Inc., acquired at the above sale.

Mr and Mrs Beverly Bogert, Newport, RI, acquired from the above.

Her Estate Sale; Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., New York, 24 March 1954, lot 70.

Cianis, acquired at the above sale.

Private Collection, USA.

Anon. Sale; Sotheby's, New York, 1 Nov. 1995, lot 75.

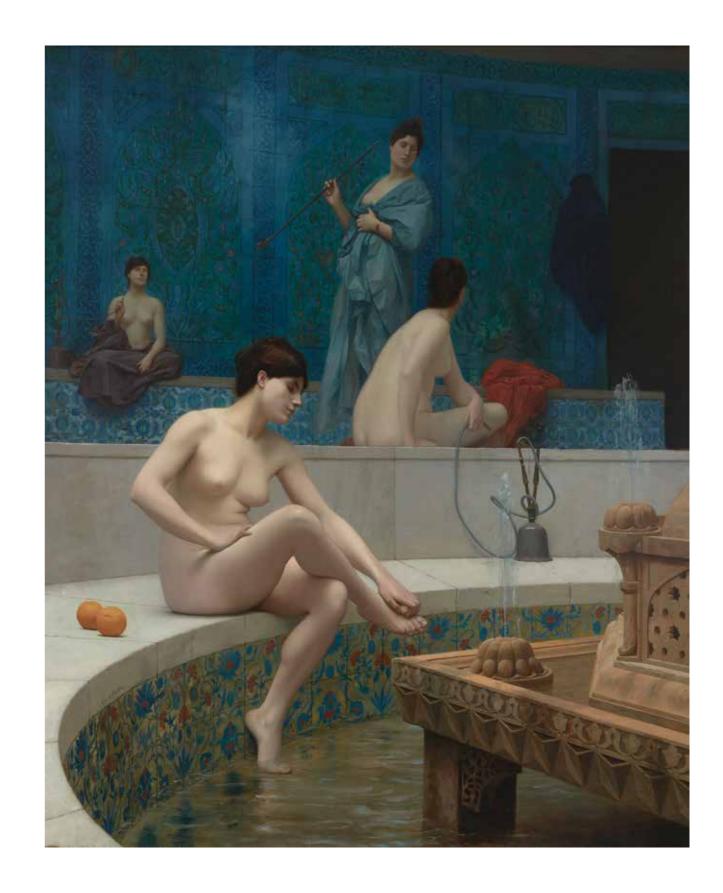
Private Collection, Europe.

LITERATURE:

Paris Photographs: Gérôme, Oeuvres, Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, vol V

G. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme, with a catalogue raisonné*, London and New York, 1986 (republished 1992, 2000), p. 266, no. 380 (illus. p. 267).

L. de Cars, D. de Font-Reaulx and E. Papet, *Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824 – 1904): L'Histoire en Spectacle*, exh. cat., The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; and Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, 2010, p. 288 (illus. fig. 137).



44. DICKINSON Jean-Léon GÉRÔME 45.

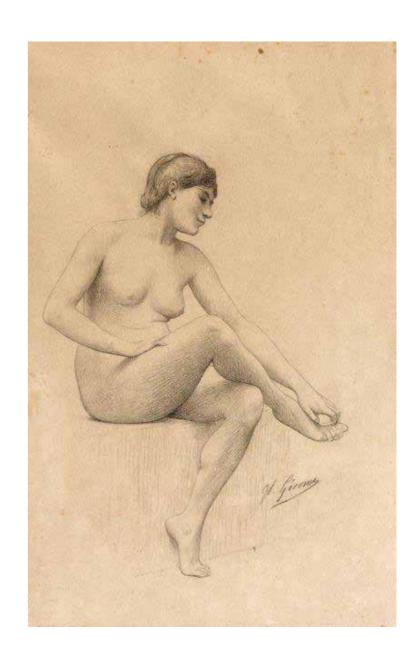
The subject of *Les Baigneuses du Harem* was not uncommon in 19th Century painting; artists including Delacroix, Ingres and Chassériau had already received critical acclaim for their nudes set in Turkish interiors. Gérôme's nudes are less lascivious yet no less sensual than the *odalisques* and bathers painted by Ingres, for instance in his famous *Le Bain Turc* of 1862, with the central figure scrubbing her foot rather than reclining to be admired by the viewer.

During his travels to Turkey in 1875 and 1879, Gérôme made a number of sketches of the local monuments. He is also known to have documented the interior of the New Baths in an oil sketch that has since been lost, and to have visited the Palace of the Seraglio as a guest of the court painter.

Further to his sketches, Gérôme relied on photographs supplied to him by the Istanbul photography firm Abdullah Frères in composing works such as *Les Baigneuses du Harem*. Ackerman also points out that Gérôme had sections of his studio covered with tiles he had brought back with him from the Middle East to use as background settings in his paintings. The pair of oranges, sitting on the stone ledge next to the central figure, employs Gérôme's favourite cadmium orange.

There are two other known versions of the composition, both horizontal in format (Ackerman nos. 381-82; both titled Vapeur humide). One example (no. 382) was offered for sale at Sotheby's New York (2 Nov. 2001, lot 37, catalogued as 'Gérôme and Studio'). Both are composed from a relatively more elevated vantage point, and include the two seated nude bathers in the background but not the standing woman in a long wrap. They are less closely cropped than our picture, which is likely to be the prime version, considering that Ackerman 381 (currently lost) appears to be unfinished and Ackerman 382 is designated to be by Gérôme and Studio (probably left unfinished in the studio at Gérôme's death and completed by studio assistants). The composition postdates Gérôme's final trip to Turkey in 1879, and would have relied on a combination of sketches made on the spot and figure studies done in his studio in Paris (fig. 1).







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Text: Dr. Molly Dorkin Resesarch: John Swarbrooke Design: Lara Pilkington

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