

PATRICK JEFFERSON



SIMON-JOSEPH-ALEXANDRE CLÉMENT DENIS, *A TURKISH CAPRICCIO*

Oil on canvas, signed with initials, inscribed and dated *D F(ecit) 1790*.

Provenance: His Royal Highness Prince Jefri Bolkia of Brunei.

Height 19¾" (50.2cm)

Width 25" (63.5cm)

This extraordinary subject, depicting a Turkish riverside scene envisaged in neoclassical taste, crisply detailed with camels walking over a bridge and figures taking coffee and smoking *chibouk* pipes, is unique in the artist's oeuvre.¹ The elegant European figure on the far bank is also intriguing, suggesting that this may be a portrait of the artist's patron (fig. 3).

Simon Denis (1755-1813) was born in Antwerp where he studied before moving to Paris, where he gained the patronage of Jean-Baptiste Le Brun, whose support allowed him to move to Rome after 1786. Denis specialised in finished landscapes of famous sites, such as the waterfalls of Tivoli, which brought great acclaim and a close relationship with the head of the French academy in Rome, as well as with other artists including Lebrun's more famous wife Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun.

Denis's technique was exact and meticulous, paying great attention to naturalistic details and light effects. Indeed, the artist is considered an early exponent of *plein-air* painting, making open air oil sketches around Rome which he unusually he signed and annotated.² Denis was appointed court painter to Joseph Bonaparte, King of Naples, in 1806, and remained in Italy until his death in 1813.

(Further detailed research available on request).

1. V. Brachini, *Simon Denis, (1755-1813) in Italia*, 2003, no. 11

2. P. Conisbee, V. Pomarede, *In the Light of Italy*, 1996, pp. 145-49

69 PIMLICO ROAD, LONDON. SW1W 8NE

TEL: +44 (0) 207 730 6161

PATRICK@PATRICKJEFFERSON.COM

SIMON-JOSEPH-ALEXANDRE CLÉMENT DENIS, A *TURKISH CAPRICCIO*



fig. 1



fig. 2



fig. 3