

PATRICK JEFFERSON



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

Date Oil on canvas, signed and dated *D F(ecit) 1790*.

Provenance His Royal Highness Prince Jefri Bolkia, of Brunei.

Dimensions Height 19 3/4" (50.2) Width 25" (63.5cm)

Description Simon Denis (1755-1813) was born and studied in Antwerp, moving to Paris where he gained the patronage of Jean-Baptiste Lebrun whose support allowed him to move to Rome from 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 the painter Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun.

Denis's technique was exact and detailed, 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 unusually he often signed and annotated.¹ Denis was appointed court painter to Joseph Bonaparte, King of Naples, in 1806 remaining in the city until his death in 1813.

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.² The positioning of the elegant European figure on the far bank is also intriguing, proposing the possibility that this is a portrait of the artist's patron. (Further detailed research available on request.)

1. P. Conisbee, V. Pomarede, *et al.*, *In the Light of Italy*, Yale, 1996, pp. 145-149.

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

Price £85,000

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SIMON-JOSEPH-ALEXANDRE CLEMENT DENIS, 'A TURKISH CAPRICCIO'



Fig. 1



Fig.2



Fig.3