

JEAN-FRANÇOIS RAFFAËLLI

(Paris, 1850 - Paris, 1924)

Au bord de la mer

signed, lower right: *JF. RAFFAËLLI*

watercolour and wash with oil and charcoal on board

645 x 865 mm

Provenance:

Private collection, Switzerland

As a painter, engraver, sculptor, musician, theorist, and actor, Jean-François Raffaëlli was interested in all forms of creative expression. He received no formal artistic training in his youth, and his early career was in music and theatre rather than in art. Despite this lack of training, with good fortune, one of Raffaëlli's landscape paintings was accepted by the Salon Jury in 1870. The following year he enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and studied in the studio of Jean-Léon Gérôme for three months, launching his artistic career.

Although Raffäelli's art avoids neat classification, he was associated with nearly every contemporary artistic and literary circle of the mid-to-late 19th century. He was a friend of Edgar Degas and through the older man's influence he began a close association with the Impressionist group and exhibited at the Impressionist exhibitions of 1880 and 1881, much to the distaste of Claude Monet who viewed Raffäelli as a Realist and absented himself from the exhibition of 1880 in protest. Raffäelli, however, would define his own artistic theory as 'caractérisme', a call to look beyond the literal description of nature and to reveal the essential character of contemporary society. From 1877, Raffaëlli therefore moved his focus from the more picturesque elements of Paris to the bleak landscape at its fringe and the street life of the city, the rag-pickers, workers, and garlic-sellers who had been pushed to the extremes by Georges-Eugène Hausmann's urbanisation project. Outside Paris, Raffäelli also found artistic inspiration on the Normandy coast at Honfleur, where he stayed in 1882, and on the island of Jersey, which became a favourite summertime destination throughout the 1880s.

We are grateful to Brame & Lorenceau for confirming the attribution to Jean-Francois Raffaëlli on first-hand inspection. The work will be included in their *Catalogue critique informatise* on the artist, currently in preparation.