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Napoleon at the Bridge of Arcole *by* Gros

Original Lithographic Bookplate - Main Subject: Portrait

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9382786369

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Dimensions (As Shown)
5W x 6.5H Inches
12.7W x 16.51H cm

Medium
Original Lithographic Bookplate

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About Gros

The son of a painter, Antoine Jean Gros was born in Paris on March 16, 1771. At the age of 14 he entered the studio of Jacques Louis David, the acknowledged leader of the classical revival. Although his own work became radically different from David's, he maintained a lifelong respect for his teacher and envisioned himself as the upholder of the Davidian tradition.

In 1787 Gros entered the Académie de Peinture, and when the Académie dissolved in 1793 (a result of the French Revolution) he went to Italy. He met Josephine Bonaparte in Genoa in 1796, and she introduced him to Napoleonic society. Gros entered Napoleon's immediate entourage and accompanied him on several north Italian campaigns. Gros also became involved with Napoleon's program of confiscating Italian art for removal to France.

Gros returned to Paris in 1800 and began to show his Napoleonic paintings in the annual Salons. The most famous of these are the Pesthouse at Jaffa (1804) and Napoleon at Eylau (1808). These works served to deify Napoleon, showing him engaged in acts of heroism and mercy. Stylistically, the paintings were revolutionary:their exotic settings, rich color, agitated space, and general penchant for showing the gruesome specifics of war and suffering differed radically from the cool generalizations of Davidian classicism that Gros had learned as a student. The presentation of contemporary historical events was also new, a harbinger of the realism that developed steadily during the first half of the 19th century in French, American, and English painting. Finally, the emphatic emotionalism of Gros's art established the foundation of romantic painting that Théodore Géricault and Eugène Delacroix developed after him.

Unlike that of some of his countrymen (David is a case in point), Gros's position did not suffer after the fall of Napoleon. Gros painted for the restored monarchy, for instance, Louis XVIII Leaving the Tuileries (1817), and he decorated the dome of the Panthéon in Paris with scenes of French history (1814-1824). For this Charles X made him a baron in 1824. But these works lack the zest and commitment of Gros's Napoleonic period, perhaps because they were not based on the immediate kinds of historical experiences that had inspired the earlier paintings.

Although marked by considerable public success, Gros's later career was in many ways acutely troubled. Basically, he could not resolve his personal esthetic theories with his own painting or with the work of his younger contemporaries. To the end Gros wished to propagate the classicism of David, and he took over David's studio when the master was exiled in 1816. By the 1820s, however, the revolutionary romanticism of Géricault and Delacroix, among others, had clearly begun to eclipse classicism, and Gros found himself fighting a lonely and losing battle for conservatism. Ironically, he was fighting a trend that his own best work had helped to originate. As he persisted, moreover, his own painting began to show a diffident mixture of classic and romantic attitudes. Thus, while he was inherently a romantic, he tragically came to doubt himself. Gros died on June 26, 1835, apparently a suicide.

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Sorry. No information about this medium is available.

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