



**THE SECRETAN COLLECTION –
THREE-VOLUME AUCTION
CATALOGUE DETAILING A FRENCH
PAINTINGS COLLECTION NOW IN
THE WORLD’S MOST IMPORTANT
MUSEUMS – WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
OF EACH WORK**

Eugène Secrétan (1839-1899) was a French businessman who made his fortune in the copper-making industry. His copper was used in the creation of the Statue of Liberty. At the height of his success, Secrétan established a major collection of nineteenth-century French and old master paintings. He went bankrupt during the French economic depression of the late nineteenth-century and was forced to sell off his collection in 1889 to pay his debts.¹

Catalogue de Tableaux Ancien et Modernes et Objets d'Art Formant la Célèbre Collection de M. E. Secrétan. Vols. 1-2. Paris. Charles Sedelmeyer's Galleries. July 1-4, 1889. Hardcover. Volume 1 has 104 pages, and volume 2 has 115 pages. 305 lots in total. Illustrated. In French. A substantial, two-volume catalogue was published to accompany Secrétan's sale. The first book has a lengthy preface written by art critic Albert Wolff (1835-1891). Volume one displays his collection of modern French art, which included paintings, drawings, and watercolors by Corot, Courbet, Couture, Daubigny, Delacroix, Géricault, Ingres, Meissonier, Millet, and Rousseau, among others. Each work is briefly described and very limited amount of provenance and exhibition history information is included. A large illustration accompanies each entry. Volume two of the catalogue is dedicated two Secrétan's equally-impressive collection of old masters, including works by Bellini, Boucher, Cuypp, van Dyck, Fragonard, Lorrain, Greuze, Hals, Vermeer, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Rubens, Ruisdael, Tiepolo, and Velasquez. It also includes some art objects, furniture, and sculpture. Volume two includes selected annotations regarding prices and buyers.

Catalogue de 17 Tableaux Anciens et Modernes Ayant récemment fait partie de la Collection Secrétan. Paris. Mm Boussod, Valadon & Cie & Ch. Sedelmeyer. July 13, 1889. Hardcover. 38 pages. 17 lots. Illustrated. In French. A smaller catalogue for a second sale, separate but seemingly related to the earlier auction mentioned above. The paper and illustrations are of noticeably lower quality than those of the first two catalogues. This book includes seventeen works by Pater, Hobbema, Ostade, van de Velde, Wouwermans, Perugino, Decamps, Delacroix,



Millet, and Troyon. Although most of these artists are also represented in volumes one and two, these specific works were not included in the earlier sale. Annotated in the same fashion as volume two.

The Secrétan sale was highly successful, totaling over one million dollars.² Jean-François Millet's *The Angelus* (no. 63) sold for a record 553,000 fr thanks to a bidding war won by the American Art Association in New York.³ *The Angelus* is now at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. The art in the Secrétan collection was of extremely high quality, and many pieces are now in major museums, often passing through prestigious private collections along the way. For example, Alexander Decamps's *The Experts* was acquired by famed American collector Henry Osborne Havemeyer (1847-1907) shortly after the sale and later passed into the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection following his wife Louisine Havemeyer's death in 1929.⁴

All three volumes have orange board covers with gilt lettering on the spines and white ink cataloging numbers. The pages, text, and illustrations are all clean, sharp, and crisp. Each illustration has a protective sheet of tissue paper. An impressive catalogue in fine condition.

\$500.00

NOTES:

1. "Eugène Secrétan". Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eug%C3%A8ne_Secr%C3%A9tan. Accessed Oct. 22, 2014.
2. "Secretan's Sale Closed: More Than a Million Dollars Realized. Some of the purchasers and the prices paid – A story about Millet never before told." *New York Times* July 2, 1889. Available online at <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9D02EFDF143AEF33A25750C0A9619C94689FD7CF>. Accessed Oct. 22, 2014.
3. "*The Angelus* (painting)". Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Angelus_\(painting\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Angelus_(painting)). Accessed Oct. 22, 2014.
4. "The Experts". Metropolitan Museum of Art online collection database. <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/436114>. Accessed Oct. 22, 2014.