

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Alexandre Thomas FRANCIA (Calais 1820 - Brussels 1884)

A Still Life of Letters, Cards, an Envelope, a Pencil, a Match and a Cigar Stub

Watercolour.

Signed with a depiction of the artist's visiting card, inscribed Mr A. FRANCIA. / 6 rue de Berceau and P.P.C. in black ink.

Dated 1880 twice, on a letter and a banknote.

171 x 214 mm. (6 3/4 x 8 3/8 in.)

This charming still life watercolour is unusual in Alexandre Francia's oeuvre, which is dominated by landscapes and marine subjects. When the present sheet was exhibited in London in 1985, it was noted that 'Painted not long before the artist died, it carries, with its cigar stub and the black-edged visiting card ironically marked P.P.C. (parti pour congé), a suitably valedictory message.' (London, Anthony Reed Gallery, Louis Francia and his son Alexandre, exhibition catalogue, 1985, p.4.)

Provenance:

Nicholas Meinertzhagen, London
King Street Galleries, London, in 1987
Mr. and Mrs. Jerrold Ziff, Urbana, Illinois.

Exhibitions

London, Anthony Reed Gallery, Louis Francia and his son Alexandre, exhibition catalogue, 1985, p.87, no.56, illustrated p.32.

Artist description:

The son and pupil of the emigré French watercolourist François Louis Francia, who worked for some twenty-five years in England, Alexandre Francia was raised in his father's native city of Calais. Unlike his father, who after returning from London in 1817 worked in relative obscurity in Calais until his death in 1839, Alexandre travelled extensively throughout Europe, particularly in Scotland and the Low Countries, and eventually settled in Brussels. He specialized in marine subjects, notably views of ports, fishing scenes and storms. He made his Salon debut in Paris in 1835, and was to exhibit in Paris, London, Antwerp and Brussels throughout his career, receiving numerous honours and prizes.

His style was indebted to that of his father, although as one recent scholar has noted, 'Alexandre's fastidious drawing and brilliance of palette never quite compensate for what he has failed to grasp of his father's breadth of vision...For all that, the best early watercolours by Alexandre can come very close indeed to his father's work and, but for his obliging habit of signing nearly all his work, would pose some thorny problems for the collector.'