

Jean METZINGER (Nantes 1883 - Paris 1956)

The Yellow Feather (La Plume Jaune)

Pencil on paper.
Signed and dated Metzinger 12 in pencil at the lower left.
315 x 231 mm. (12 3/8 x 9 1/8 in.)

The present sheet is closely related to Jean Metzinger's large painting The Yellow Feather, a seminal Cubist canvas of 1912, which is today in an American private collection. The painting was one of twelve works by Metzinger included in the Cubist exhibition at the Salon de La Section d'Or in 1912. One of the few paintings of this period to be dated by the artist, The Yellow Feather is regarded by scholars as a touchstone of Metzinger's early Cubist period. Drawn with a precise yet sensitive handling of fine graphite on paper, the drawing repeats the multifaceted, fragmented planes of the face in the painting, along with the single staring eye, drawn as a simple curlicue.

The Yellow Feather was one of several Cubist paintings depicting women in fashionable clothes, and with ostrich feathers in their hats, which were painted by Metzinger in 1912 and 1913.

Provenance:

alerie Hopkins-Thomas, Paris
Private collection, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, until 2011.

Literature:

Jean-Paul Monery, Les chemins de cubisme, exhibition catalogue, Saint-Tropez, 1999, illustrated pp.134-135; Anisabelle Berès and Michel Arveiller, Au temps des Cubistes, 1910-1920, exhibition

catalogue, Paris, 2006, pp.428-429, no.180.

Artist description:

Trained in the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Nantes, Jean Metzinger sent three paintings to the Salon des Indépendants in 1903 and, having sold them, soon thereafter settled in Paris. His early work was in a Neo-Impressionist style, and in 1904 he exhibited in a group show at the Galerie Berthe Weill and also at the Salon d'Automne. Friendly with the painter Robert Delaunay, he also met the poets Max Jacob and Guillaume Apollinaire and, through them, Pablo Picasso. In 1910 Metzinger published an article on 'Cubist' artists in the German magazine Pan, linking the work of the painters Picasso, Delaunay, Georges Braque and Henri Le Fauconnier. At the Salon des Indépendants of 1911 the work of Metzinger, Gleizes, Delaunay, Le Fauconnier and Fernand Leger was exhibited in a separate room, in what was one of the first public manifestations of the nascent movement that would come to be known as Cubism. In one review of the exhibition, by the critic André Salmon, Metzinger was sardonically described as 'le jeune prince du Cubisme'.

Metzinger's Cubist style continued to develop independently in the years leading up to the outbreak of the First World War, and in 1912 he published, together with Gleizes, the treatise Du Cubisme, the earliest significant critical account of the movement. In the same year he also took part in the Salon de La Section d'Or, the first large exhibition of Cubist work. By the following year Metzinger was being described by Apollinaire, in his book Les peintres cubistes, as the third most significant Cubist artist, after Picasso and Braque. During the war Metzinger served in the ambulance corps, and on his discharge in 1916 began working under contract for the dealer Léonce Rosenberg, producing paintings characterized by a sombre palette of browns, blacks, greens and blues. He also befriended a number of other artists associated with the Cubist movement, including Juan Gris and Jacques Lipchitz. Metzinger continued to exhibit at Rosenberg's Parisian gallery L'Effort Moderne throughout the 1920's, alongside other Cubist artists, and by the second half of the decade was working with brighter colours and less fragmented forms. After the Second World War, however, the paintings he produced were largely pastiches of his earlier, seminal Cubist style of the second and third decades of the century.