

Tamara De Lempicka (1898 - 1980)

Portrait of Louisanne Kuffner de Dioszegh

Pencil.
Inscribed Louisianne 1940 / Beverly Hills, Cal. on the verso.
141 x 91 mm. (5 1/2 x 3 5/8 in.)

The present sheet is a portrait of the artist's stepdaughter, Louisanne Kuffner de Dioszegh (1925-2009), the daughter of Baron Kuffner from his first marriage. Executed when the sitter was at the age of fifteen, when the artist was living in the former home of the director King Vidor in Beverly Hills in California, the drawing is related to a full-length painted portrait of Louisanne which, however, was never completed.

As Louisanne recalled in later years, 'When the Second World War broke out in 1939, my step sister Kizette and I were in France, my brother Peter was in Scotland, and my parents, Baron Raoul Kuffner de Dioszegh and my stepmother, the artist Tamara de Lempicka, were in the United States. They could not return to Europe and we had to apply for immigration visas to the Unites States. It was the end of July, 1940, when Kizette and I arrived in Beverly Hills…It was at this time that Tamara de Lempicka began a full length portrait of me. Unfortunately, she did not finish it that summer…as a result, the full length painting was never completed.'

Following the death of Baron Kuffner in 1961, the artist cropped the unfinished canvas to show just the head of Louisanne, looking to the left, and sent the painting to her. Sold by the sitter at auction in 2000, the painting is now in an American private collection. The present sheet, however, remained in the possession of the sitter until her death in 2009.

Provenance:

Given by the artist to the sitter, Louisanne Kuffner de Dioszegh, later Mrs. Nathaniel Glickman, Thousand Oaks, California and Medford, Oregon
Thence by descent until 2010.

Artist description:

Born in Poland to upper class parents, Tamara Gurwik-Gorska was educated in Switzerland and settled with her family in St. Petersburg in 1914. Two years she married a young lawyer, Count Tadeusz Lempicki. In 1918, fleeing the Bolshevik revolution, the couple moved to Paris, where she was to live for the next twenty years. She began studying with Maurice Denis and André Lhote, who was to be a particular influence on her painting style, and adopted the name Tamara de Lempicka. Her first paintings were sold in 1922 at the Galerie Colette Weill, and in the same year she exhibited for the first time at the Salon d'Automne in Paris. De Lempicka was to show yearly at the Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Indépendants, where her work was greatly admired. A one-woman exhibition at the Bottega di Poesia in Milan in 1925 was equally successful with critics and collectors.

The late 1920's and early 1930's found the artist at the height of her career, enjoying an exalted position in Parisian society and exhibiting her portraits at the Galerie Colette Weill in Paris. In 1932 the Musée de Luxembourg acquired one of her paintings for 8,000 francs, and the following year she married her second husband, Baron Raoul Kuffner de Dioszegh. The second half of the 1930's saw a dramatic reduction in her output, largely due to bouts of depression, and during this period her paintings tended towards subjects of a religious or rustic nature.

After recovering her health in 1938, she decided to relaunch her career in America, and early in 1939, shortly before the outbreak of war, De Lempicka and Kuffner left Europe and sailed to New York, where the artist had her first major American exhibition at the Paul Reinhardt Gallery. The following year the couple settled in Los Angeles, and De Lempicka once again enjoyed a busy social life in Hollywood. A large retrospective exhibition of her work at the Julien Levy galleries in New York and Los Angeles in 1941 and 1942 served to secure her artistic reputation in America. The Kuffners moved to New York in 1942, and after the war De Lempicka began to travel extensively around Europe, as well as visiting Cuba and Mexico. Her work of the postwar period, however, achieved little public recognition or success, and she refused to exhibit her work after 1962, though she continued to paint for a few more years. Tamara de Lempicka's work began to be rediscovered in the early 1970's, a few years before her death in Mexico in 1980.