Stephen Ongpin Fine Art

Armand Point (French 1860 - 1932)

Âme d'Automne (Autumn Soul)

Pastel on brown paper.
Signed APoint at the lower right.
483 x 645 mm. (19 x 25 3/8 in.)

This beautiful pastel portrait was exhibited by Armand Point, with the title Âme d'Automne, at the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts on the Champ de Mars in Paris in 1893. A contemporary photograph of the exhibition shows the present work hanging alongside nine other highly finished pastel paintings of young women by the artist. All of the works shown by Point at the Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts of 1893 were much admired by critics, and two of the pastels were purchased by the State.

The model for this pastel portrait was Point's companion and muse, Hélène Linder (1867-1955), who met the artist around 1886. Linder posed for several of his finest paintings, drawings, pastels and prints of the 1890's. As the Point scholar Robert Doré has noted of the artist, 'his observations focused on Hélène...she remained his preferred model until the end of the century...She was above all the inspiration and muse of Armand Point who would, thanks to her, know a period of exceptional creativity.' Hélène Linder and Point lived together at Marlotte for nearly eight years. This period, as Doré has noted, accounts for some of 'the artist's finest works [in] the most brilliantly creative period in his career. These works are a testament to the deep tenderness that unified them, and the enthusiasm they shared in Marlotte.' Point and Linder remained together until 1899, when Hélène met and eventually married the diplomat Philippe Berthelot.

Datable to 1892 or early 1893, this large and beautifully preserved pastel portrait is one of the finest works of Armand Point's early maturity, and splendidly displays the artist's talents as a draughtsman. Long held in private collections, it has remained largely unknown to scholars since it was exhibited at the Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1893.

Provenance:

M. de Saverny, in 1893.

Exhibitions

Paris, Champ de Mars, Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, May 1893, no.1349 (Ame d'Automne, lent by M. de Saverny); Paris, Saint-Honoré Art Consulting and London, Hazlitt, Gooden &

Fox, Pastels, November-December 2011, no.12.

Literature:

Robert Doré, Armand Point et son oeuvre (1861-1932), unpublished thesis, Université de Paris I, 2007, Vol.II, pp.202 and 204; Robert Doré, Armand Point: De l'orientalisme au symbolisme, 2010, pp.43, pp.48-50, fig.40 and p.125.

Artist description:

Born in Algeria to a French father and Spanish mother, Armand Point arrived in Paris in 1870 at the age of nine as an orphan. He won several prizes for drawing at school, and in 1879 returned to Algiers, where he began painting Orientalist subjects. One of his works was accepted at the Paris Salon of 1882, the first of a number of Orientalist paintings he sent to the Salons over the next few years. Returning to Paris, Point had his first one-man exhibition at the Galerie Georges Petit in 1889, showing paintings influenced by the art of the English Pre-Raphaelites and the symbolism of the Middle Ages. In 1891 Point settled in Marlotte, in the forest of Fontainebleau to the south of Paris, in a large house and studio where he was to work for almost forty years. In 1893 he exhibited a number of pastel drawings, including the present large sheet, at the Societé Nationale des Beaux-Arts, to considerable critical acclaim. He also participated in the Salons organized by Joséphin ('Sâr') Péladan's Rose + Croix movement between 1892 and 1896, where he often exhibited drawings.

Following a trip to Italy in 1894, and exposure to the works of Sandro Botticelli and other Renaissance masters, Point changed his style radically. After his Italian sojourn, Point's paintings attempted to reconstruct the techniques and palettes of the Italian painters of the 15th century, taking the work of such artists as Botticelli and Leonardo da Vinci as exemplars. Inspired by the precepts of William Morris, in 1896 Point established a crafts studio in Marlotte. Entitled Haute-Claire, the atelier employed artists and craftsmen of many different nationalities, and produced jewelry, glass, pottery and other objects, many after Point's own designs, until it was closed in 1916.