Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Julien Adolphe DUVOCELLE (Lille 1873 - Corbeil-Essonnes 1961)

Two Skulls

Black chalk and brown wash on varnished light brown paper with an arched top; a drawn border in black chalk.
Signed and dated Duvocelle julien / 98 at the lower right.
346 x 517 mm. (13 5/8 x 20 3/8 in.)

This drawing, dated 1898, is a youthful work by the artist, executed the year after his Salon debut. Its Symbolist overtones and macabre subject are reflected in a comparable drawing by the artist of A Skull with Bulging Eyeballs and a Scythe Gripping a Wall in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

Literature:

Jori Finkel, 'Lovely Bones', Art + Auction, October 2008, illustrated in room photograph on p.108.

Artist description:

Julien Adolphe Duvocelle (sometimes du Vocelle) studied in his native Lille with the portrait and genre painter Pharaon de Winter before entering the studio of Léon Bonnat at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. (The young artist also received the encouragement of Alfred Agache, another painter from Lille, who purchased one of his early works and commissioned a portrait from him.) Duvocelle made his debut at the Salon des Artistes Français in 1897, gaining an honourable mention that year and a third class medal the year after, and he continued to exhibit there regularly until 1927. Active mainly as a still life and portrait painter, he painted a portrait of the painter Felix Ziem, now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Beaune. A portrait of his mother won a bronze medal at the Exposition Universelle in 1900, where it was purchased by Agache; the painting is now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lille.

In 1905 Duvocelle participated in an international portrait exhibition at the Kunsthalle in Bremen, and in 1906 was commissioned to produce a poster for a cigarette manufacturer. After the First World War, however, his work suffered a decline in popularity. He was unable to exhibit his paintings after 1927, and found himself struggling to survive as an artist. Indeed, in 1930 he was reduced to asking for financial support from the benevolent fund of the Société des Artistes Français, and two years later was struck off the register of the Société. His later paintings are mostly portraits, painted in a dull, academic style at odds with the melancholy Symbolism of his best work in the 1890's and early 1900's. Unknown and forgotten, the artist died in complete obscurity in a Parisian suburb in 1961.