Avigdor ARIKHA (Rădăuți 1928 - Paris 2010)

Interior with Drawings

Pastel on emery paper.

Signed and dated *Arikha Nov.88* at the lower centre edge.

505 x 300 mm. (19 7/8 x 11 3/4 in.)

This belongs with a group of pastel drawings that Avigdor Arikha produced in the 1980s. As the artist later recalled, writing in the introduction to the catalogue of an exhibition of his pastels held in 2007, in which this work was included, 'One winter afternoon, during the first months of 1983, I was present at the arrival and unpacking of a crate at the Cabinet des Dessins of the Louvre. It contained the pastel-portrait of Madame Tronchin by Jean-Etienne Liotard. Its impact was such that I rushed to get pastels on the very next morning. I had not practiced this medium since the early '50s...The twenty-five pastels paintings in this exhibition were never exhibited nor published, remaining hidden in their drawer until now.' The use of pastel became an important part of Arikha's artistic process, and the medium was applied not only to drawing paper or tinted board, but also soft velvet paper, or, as in the present sheet, emery paper. The rough surface of the emery paper used by the artist, as Duncan Thomson has noted, 'allow forms that are more fragmented, that do not strive for the same degree of 'completeness', so that the white or the tint of the base plays a role in the finished work...the fine crystals of alumina [in emery paper] take up the pressure of pastel in their own particular way.'

Drawn in November 1988, this pastel is closely related to a much larger oil painting entitled Reflections on the Drawings, completed in December of the following year and today in a private collection, in which the side of a bookcase appears at the left edge of the canvas. The framed drawing at the upper left of this composition, a study of heads by Alberto Giacometti, is more readily evident in the large painting.

Arikha returned to the motif of reflections in a wall of framed drawings several years later, in a large pastel drawing executed on the 11th and 12th of January, 2000.

Provenance:

The estate of the artist
Marlborough Fine Art, London.

Exhibitions

New York, Marlborough Gallery Inc., *Avigdor Arikha: twenty-five pastels*, November 2007, no.3; London, Jeremy Scholar, *Avigdor Arikha: Interiors and Still Lifes, 1969-2009*, 2026.