Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Pierre PRINS (Paris 1838 - Paris 1913)

A View of the English Channel at Puys, near Dieppe

Pastel on paper, laid down on board.
Signed Pierre Prins at the lower right.
Inscribed La mer à Puys / Pierre Prins on the backing board.
283 x 382 mm. (11 1/8 x 15 in.)

As one scholar has written of Pierre Prins, 'In order to vary the infinite charms of the rising and setting sun, to display all the waves and vibrations, all the scintillations in the atmosphere, the greatest expanse of sky was necessary. For this reason, Prins reduced the lower band of his compositions – land or sea – to the strictest minimum…For Prins the sky was the reflection of the uncertain, changing, ephemerous world below.'

A number of stylistically comparable pastel landscapes by Pierre Prins are in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay.

Artist description:

Shy and unassuming by nature, Pierre Prins worked in relative solitude for most of his career. Although he was close friends with several of the Impressionists, notably Edouard Manet, Alfred Sisley and Frederic Bazille, he preferred not to take part in the artistic debates and controversies of the period. His style, while at times close to that of the Impressionist painters, remained distinctively his own. In 1878, inspired by Manet's pastels, he began to work in the medium, becoming highly proficient and eventually working almost exclusively in pastel. In 1890, at the age of fifty, he had his first one-man exhibition, showing some forty landscapes – almost all executed in pastel - at the Galerie Georges Petit in Paris.

Prins exhibited regularly at the Salons and with such dealers as Georges Petit, Durand-Ruel, Goupil and Boussod et Valadon. However, on his deathbed, he asked his heirs not to exhibit his work, nor to release any work from his studio, for a period of thirty years after his death. As a result, his work remained almost completely unknown for much of the period when that of his friends and contemporaries among the Impressionists rose to new heights. His paintings, pastels and drawings were only again exhibited in Paris during the Second World War, but it was not until a retrospective exhibition at the Galerie Durand-Ruel in Paris in 1963 that his work came to be better known and appreciated.

In the 1880's and 1890's Prins spent much time on the coast of Normandy and Brittany, and produced a

large number of pastel studies of the sea and sky. While some of his pastel landscapes are very large, reaching almost two metres in size, most are smaller in scale and more intimate. He often used a coarse-grained coloured paper, and almost never used any fixative, so as to keep his pastels as bright and fresh as possible. An interest in atmospheric effects is evident in much of his work, with a particular interest in the sky at sunrise, in full sunlight, at twilight and at sunset.