



Paul Albert BESNARD (Paris 1849 - Paris 1936)

Portrait of a Young Man in Profile

Oil on board.

Signed with the artist's monogram and dated AB 77 at the lower left.

113 x 101 mm. (4 1/2 x 4 in.)

ACQUIRED BY THE FOUNDATION CUSTODIA (COLLECTION FRITS LUGT), PARIS.

Painted during Albert Besnard's stay at the French Academy in Rome, this small portrait may depict a fellow pensionnaire at the Villa Medici.

Provenance:

David and Constance Yates, New York

Acquired from them in 1992 by Charles Ryskamp, New York.

Artist description:

Albert Besnard entered the École des Beaux-Arts in 1866, studying with Alexandre Cabanel before making his debut at the Salon in 1868. Six years later he won the Prix de Rome with a painting of the Death of Timophanes, Tyrant of Corinth. His five years at the Villa Medici in Rome were followed by three years in London, between 1879 and 1881, during which he obtained several important portrait commissions. By the 1880's Besnard was one of the most highly regarded and fashionable society portrait painters in Paris. He developed a particularly evocative manner of depicting his sitters that relied on luminous, vibrant colours, dramatic (and at times artificial) lighting and bold brushwork. These elements also found their way into the artist's other main activity; his work as a decorative mural painter.

Besnard painted large decorative schemes for several public buildings in Paris, including the Sorbonne, the Ecole de Pharmacie and the Pavillon des Arts Décoratifs at the Exposition Universelle of 1900, as well as ceiling decorations for the Salon des Sciences of the Hôtel de Ville, the Comédie

Francaise and the Petit Palais. He also created mural decorations for a number of private homes, including L'Art Nouveau Bing, the shop of the Parisian dealer and collector Siegfried Bing on the rue de Provence in Paris, and the villa of Baron Joseph Vitta at Evian.

Although Besnard was strongly influenced by the work of the Impressionists, he never exhibited with them, leading Edgar Degas to comment that 'Besnard is flying with our wings'. Besnard did, however, exhibit regularly at the Salons, and at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts from 1890 onwards. He also worked as a printmaker, executing a series of twenty-six etchings on the theme of Death for his patron Baron Vitta in 1900, and produced designs for stained glass. In 1910-1911 he travelled extensively around India, and the paintings from this trip were exhibited to critical acclaim in 1912 at the Galerie Georges Petit in Paris. Between 1923 and his death in 1934 Besnard served as the director of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.