Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Henri Deluermoz

Studies of a Sea Eagle

Brush and black ink and brown wash, with touches of white heightening, on reddish-brown prepared paper.

Signed with a monogram and dated .hD.1906 at the lower right.

Inscribed with colour notes: brun rougeâtre, autour du bec et / des yeux (jaune), and duveter soigneussement la tête / trop mou.

273 x 398 mm. (10 3/4 x 15 5/8 in.)

Executed in 1906, this large drawing is a relatively youthful work by Henri Deluermoz. It was probably drawn at the Jardin Zoologique in Marseille, which was opened in 1856 and housed nearly 2,000 birds representing some 1,250 different species. The artist's careful study of the sea eagle is evident in his notes on the sheet: 'reddish brown', 'around beak and the eyes (yellow)', 'carefully fluffing the head' and 'very soft'.

The sea eagle is a collective name for the birds of prey in the genus Haliaeetus. While the particular type of sea eagle depicted here is difficult to firmly identify, it is most likely to be the White-tailed Eagle (Haliaeetus albicilla), found across a very wide range throughout temperate Eurasia, from Greenland to Japan.

Four drawings of animals by Henri Deluermoz – studies of an elephant, a bear, a wolf and a tiger, each of identical technique to the present sheet - are in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.

Artist description:

A painter, illustrator and engraver, Henri Deluermoz was a pupil of Alfred Roll and Gustave Moreau. He became one of the finest animal painters of his day, with a particular penchant for depictions of wild animals. He also painted Provençal landscapes, equestrian and bullfight scenes, and produced

designs for tapestries, mural decorations, and book illustrations. (Among the books he illustrated were editions of Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book, Henri de Montherlant's Les Bestiaires, and Louis Pergaud's Histoires de bêtes.) Deluermoz did not send any paintings to the Salon until 1909, when he was already in his thirties, although thereafter he exhibited there regularly, and also showed at commercial galleries in Paris between 1913 and 1919. At the Salon of 1911, a large painting of a stampede of wild animals before a flood elicited much praise from critics, with Arsène Alexandre writing in Le Figaro, 'Mais quelle connaissance de l'animalité dans cette grande peinture! Quelle vérité dans l'observation des mouvements!', while another critic wrote of the painting 'Each creature is represented in its own character, and in motion true to life, and one takes pleasure in studying in turn the elephant and the buffalo in their heavy flight, the panther bounding along, the deer leaping lightly forward – all this evolved in the mind of a Kipling of the brush.'

An exhibition of Deluermoz's work at the Galerie Reitlinger in 1913 led to the purchase by the State of a large drawing of a bullfight. An exhibition of his animal drawings was held at the Galerie Le Goupy in Paris in 1926, while a larger and more comprehensive exhibition of paintings and drawings by the artist was mounted at the Galerie Charpentier in Paris in 1939.