Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



André DERAIN (Chatou 1880 - Garches 1954)

Study of Flowers

Watercolour on buff paper.
A fragment of a nude study in red chalk on the verso.
Stamped with the Knaublich Derain collection sale stamp (not in Lugt) at the lower right centre.
233 x 334 mm. (9 1/8 x 13 1/8 in.) [sheet]

Similar watercolour studies of flowers are found in a small sketchbook of over three hundred pages used by Derain between 1903 and 1907, today in the collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris.

The present sheet was part of a group of some 4,200 drawings by Derain, sold at auction in France in 2002, which belonged to the artist's illegitimate son, André Charlemagne Derain, known as 'Boby' (1939-1996). Recognized by his father and 'adopted' by the artist's wife Alice, Boby inherited some three-quarters of the contents of Derain's studio at the time of his death in 1954. Following Boby's death in 1996, the collection passed to his mother (and Derain's model and mistress) Raymonde Knaublich, who died in 2001.

Provenance:

By descent to the artist's son, André Charlemagne ('Boby') Derain, Paris
His mother, Mme. Raymonde Knaublich, Paris
Her posthumous sale, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 23-24 March 2002.

Artist description:

André Derain remains best known today for his avant-garde work as a painter between 1900 and 1914, and in particular for his significant contribution to the short-lived movement known as Fauvism. Having abandoned his studies as an engineer in 1898, Derain's early career was dominated by the influence of two older painters whom he met around 1900; Maurice de Vlaminck, with whom he was to share a studio in Chatou, and Henri Matisse. Through Matisse, Derain met the dealer Ambroise Vollard, who purchased the contents of his studio in February 1905. Later that year he exhibited with Matisse, Vlaminck, Albert Marquet, Raoul Dufy, Georges Rouault and others at the Salon d'Automne; it was at this exhibition that this group of artists were famously dubbed fauves, or wild beasts, by the critic Louis Vauxcelles.

Derain visited London for the first time in 1905 and again in 1906, painting several views of the city for Vollard that were perhaps intended to build on the success of Claude Monet's Thames paintings, which the dealer had exhibited the previous year. Derain continued to paint in a Fauve manner in 1906 and 1907, signing a contract with the dealer D. H. Kahnweiler and becoming friendly with Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. At the beginning of 1908, however, he burned much of his recent work, which he seemed to regard as experimental and unsuccessful, and adopted a manner of painting closer to the example of Paul Cézanne. Landscapes and still life compositions continued to dominate his output, and he took part in the Salon des Indépendants in Paris between 1907 and 1910, as well as in exhibitions at galleries in London and Germany. While he remained close friends with Picasso and Braque, Derain seems never to have taken to Cubism.

After the First World War, during which he served in the French army and was unable to paint, Derain's style became more restrained and classical, with the influence of the landscape painter Camille Corot prevalent. He also began working as a stage and costume designer, and his designs for the Ballets Russes production of La Boutique Fantastique in London in 1919 proved immensely successful. Apart from landscapes and still life subjects, Derain in the 1920s painted a number of nudes and portraits. Exhibitions of his paintings were held in France, England, Germany, Sweden, Belgium and America, while his new dealer, Paul Guillaume, was successful in selling his work, particularly in America.

The 1930's found the artist painting a number of large-scale figurative works, often on mythological themes, redolent of the influence of Auguste Renoir and Aristide Maillol. Derain was also active as a sculptor, book illustrator and printmaker, and indeed his chief work of the Second World War years was a series of almost four hundred colour woodcuts for a lavish edition of Rabelais' Pantagruel, published in 1943. In the last years of his career Derain worked mainly for the stage, designing sets for several opera and ballet productions, while also continuing to produce numerous book illustrations.

As a draughtsman, Derain worked in a range of media and techniques; in pen and ink, red chalk, pencil, charcoal, gouache and watercolour. By the 1920s his drawings were being published in articles and exhibition catalogues, and were much admired by critics and connoisseurs. Many were sold as works of art in their own right, and some were also reproduced as lithographs.