Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Emilio DELLA SUDDA (Constantinople)

Portrait of the Artist's Brother, Francesco (Faik Bey) Della Sudda, Seated at a Piano

Pastel on brown paper, laid down on canvas.

Signed E. della Sudda in blue chalk at the upper left.

485 x 635 mm. (19 1/8 x 25 in.)

This fine pastel has recently been identified, by the Turkish music historian, composer and conductor Emre Araci, as a portrait of the artist's older brother, the Italo-Levantine pianist Francesco, known as Faik Bey Della Sudda (1859-1940). A pupil of Franz Liszt, Faik Bey Della Sudda - also known as 'Der Pascha' - was the son and grandson of the pharmacist to the Sultan, and is known to have given recitals in London. Another portrait of Francesco (Faik Bey) Della Sudda, by the Danish artist Arild Rosencrantz, was painted around 1900 in London.

Of a similar pastel portrait by Emilio Della Sudda exhibited in Paris, the critic Régis Delbeuf noted: 'The portrait of a woman…is simply delicious. In a pose full of abandonment and lassitude, a young girl seems to rest, her body leaning forward, hesitating in front of the open piano, which invites her. And it is an exquisite arrangement of softened tones, from the golden reflections of the blonde hair beneath which shine, very clear, large blue eyes, to the whiteness of the gauze dress stitched here and there with a pink garland and a floating green scarf. It is a work of perfect harmony and of a confidence of execution that is truly rare.' Delbeuf also noted that, 'A few years ago, about another portrait of a woman exhibited in Constantinople, we had noted the artist's mastery of pastel. And we urged him to specialize in this genre, which suits the delicacy of his art so well. We are pleased to see that Parisians share our way of seeing. Mr. Della Sudda is regarded as one of the best pastellists of our time. We had expressed the hope that the jury would reward his special talent with the prize that he deserves. This opinion had been formulated by almost every critic. M. Auguste Marguillier in particular, who has recently dedicated an extensive special study on Art by foreign artists in the Grand Palais in the Revue Encyclopédique, placed M. Della Sudda at the forefront of oriental artists worthy of note. The jury thought differently. Medals were undiscerningly given to mediocre works and this worthy artist was disdained. Never mind the jury. The artist has enough talent to do without their distinctions, he distinguishes himself enough by his talent.'

Only a handful of other large pastels by Emilio Della Sudda have appeared on the art market, while a striking portrait of a young man wearing a fez and smoking a cigarette is in a private collection in Texas.

Provenance:

Barry Friedman Ltd., New York, in c.1990
Private collection, California.

Literature:

Emre Araci, 'Piyanist Faik Bey della Sudda'nın Londra'daki portresi', Andante, January 2019, pp.34-39; Nicholas Dufutel, Les Orientales de Liszt / Liszt doğu'dan izdüşümler, exhibition catalogue, Istanbul, 2019, illustrated p.20; Emre Araci, 'Ludwika Groppler, Bebek'te Polonyalı bir piyanist', Andante, April 2021, illustrated p.60.

Artist description:

Very little is known of the life and career of the artist Emilio Della Sudda, who was originally from a Levantine family and was born and raised in Constantinople. He studied in Paris with Jules Lefèbvre and Benjamin Constant, and exhibited his work at the Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris. The artist seems to have been particularly esteemed for his work in pastel. As a review of the Exposition Universelle noted, 'M. Della Sudda est regardé comme un des meilleurs pastellistes de notre temps.'

At the Exposition Universelle of 1900, Della Sudda exhibited three pastels in the Turkish section of the exhibition; a 'Portrait of Mademoiselle N. H.'; a woman in front of a piano, 'Kief'; a depiction of an insouciant young man with a flower in his teeth, and a 'Paysage d'Orient'; a twilight landscape of a cemetery by the sea. As the Constantinople-based editor and critic Régis Delbeuf, in an account of the Paris exhibition, noted: 'Here we find the Orient, the true Orient, with its light, its transparency and its troubling charm. We do not have to reveal who M. Della Sudda is, everyone in Constantinople knows the name and appreciates his talent. He is a son of the East. His eyes were opened to the spectacle of the world on the shores of the Bosphorus, and he had the good sense to recall them.'