Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Mathurin MEHEUT (Lamballe 1882 - Paris 1958)

Fishermen at Sea

Watercolour and gouache, on blue-grey paper.

Inscribed Mathurin / Meheut on a small label pasted onto the old backing board.

332 x 510 mm. (13 1/8 x 20 1/8 in.) [sheet]

This large sheet is closely related to the drawing Sardiniers sous le vent (Sardine Fishermen in the Wind), which appeared as an illustratuion in one of the first articles about Mathurin Meheut, published in the journal Art et Décoration in 1913. That drawing was in turn apparently a maquette for the left half of a diptych illustration for an unpublished book illustration.

A similar composition is found in the unfinished gouache sketch Departure for the Open Sea, Douarnenez, in the collection of the Musée Mathurin Méheut in Lamballe.

Artist description:

A Breton painter, Mathurin Méheut studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Rennes, from which he graduated at the age of twenty. He completed his studies at the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, with the designer and decorator Eugène Grasset, while at the same time contributing to the magazine Art et Décoration to help finance his studies. In 1904 he provided illustrations for the book Fantôme de Terre-Neuve by Léon Berthaut, the first of several books he worked on throughout his career, and in 1906 began exhibiting regularly at the Salon des Artistes Français.

Although Méheut settled in Paris and established his career there, he returned frequently to Brittany, working at Douarnenez, Paimpol, Quimper, Roscoff and elsewhere in the region. Between 1910 and 1912 Méheut worked alongside naturalists at the marine biology station in Roscoff. His illustrations of sea creatures resulted in the publication of a book, Etude de la mer, flore et faune de la Manche et de l'Océan, which was accompanied by the exhibition of around 450 drawings at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1913.

The artist also travelled extensively outside France; visiting Turkey, Crete, Egypt and Syria, as well as even further afield, to New York and also to Hawaii and Japan; the latter trip was cut short by the outbreak of the First World War. After serving in the army, Méheut returned to working in Brittany, and in

1921 a second large exhibition of his oeuvre at the Pavillon de Marsan of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs included several scenes of military life, as well as views of Brittany and Japan. Throughout his travels, Méheut was interested in recording the appearance of the peoples, sites, animals and plants of the places he visited.

A member of the Académie de la Marine, Méheut achieved considerable success and was appointed official painter to the Marine Department in 1921. In 1924 he began to decorate commercial passenger ships and ocean liners, and in the same year painted murals for the Villa Miramar on the Côte d'Azur, for the banker Albert Kahn. Another important exhibition of his work was held at the Galerie Charpentier in Paris in 1928. Méheut spent three months in America in 1930, painting an extensive mural decoration on the theme of the discovery of the New World for the Heinz residence in Pittsburgh. In 1934 he participated in the decoration of the luxurious French ocean liner, the SS Normandie. Méheut was active as a decorative mural painter, book illustrator, tapestry and textile designer, stained glass painter and, not least, a ceramic painter; working at the Sèvres manufactury and for Villeroy and Boch. Later in his career he completed a series of celebrated illustrations for Florian Le Roy's book Vieux métiers bretons. The largest extant collection of the artist's oeuvre is today in the Musée Mathurin Méheut in the town of Lamballe in Brittany, established with works donated by the painter's daughter Maryvonne.