Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Eduard HILDEBRANDT (Danzig 1817 - Berlin 1869)

A View of Naples from the East

Watercolour, with touches of white heightening, over an underdrawing in pencil, on two joined sheets of paper, laid down.

167 x 549 mm. (6 5/8 x 21 5/8 in.)

This extensive watercolour view of the city of Naples from the east is likely to date from the beginning of the 1850s, when Eduard Hildebrandt travelled through Italy on his way to Greece, Turkey and Egypt. The scene depicts the Castel dell'Ovo at the extreme left of the composition, with the Castel Sant'Elmo on the hill at the centre right.

Artist description:

Born in Danzig (now Gdansk in Poland), the landscape painter Eduard Hildebrandt was first trained by his father, a house painter. Before the age of twenty he had moved to Berlin, where – despite being rejected by the Akademie der Künste – he continued his artistic education in the studio of the marine painter Wilhelm Krause. In 1840 he visited England and Scotland, and two years later went to Paris, where he studied with the watercolourist Eugène Isabey and befriended the painter Eugène Lepoittevin. Hildebrandt exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1843, when he was awarded a gold medal, and also exhibited in London and Brussels. The influence of contemporary French landscape painting remained strong after his return to Germany. In Berlin in 1843 he met the geographer and explorer Alexander von Humboldt, who became a close friend. Through the intercession of Humboldt, the young artist obtained a commission from the King of Prussia, Frederick William IV, to paint a view of Rio de Janeiro. Hildebrandt's arrival in Brazil in 1844 marked the beginning of a series of extensive travels. At Windsor Castle in 1848 he was presented to Queen Victoria, who acquired several watercolours of English and Scottish views by him; ten works by Hildebrandt, including seven views of the Highlands of Scotland, are in the Royal Collection today. The following year an exhibition of his Spanish views was held at Colnaghi's in London, with one critic, writing in the Art-Journal, praising the artist's 'complete mastery over his pencil which he uses in a freer but no less careless manner.'

One of the most well-travelled artists of his day, Hildebrandt journeyed throughout Europe, Scandinavia and the Near East, as well as Brazil, Mexico and the east and west coasts of America. Between 1862 and 1864 he undertook a long voyage to India, Ceylon, Japan, the Philippines and China, producing several hundred drawings and watercolours. An exhibition of his watercolours from this journey, held on the Boulevard des Italiens in Paris in 1866, took the form of illuminated dioramas. This novel method of displaying the works led one French critic to note that 'It is marvellous to see what these images, already so faithful to nature, gain in truth, in strength, in brilliance. The streets of Hong Kong and Peking, the theatres of Macau, the gulf of Nagasaki, illuminated by artificial light, take on a surprising value, one feels a fiery sun…' The exhibition later travelled to London, where it was shown on Pall Mall. Between 1867 and 1870 Hildebrandt published an illustrated journal entitled Reise um die Erde, or Journey

Around the World, in three volumes. A large number of the artist's topographical views and figure studies are today in the collection of the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, from which an exhibition of drawings and watercolours was held in 1959.