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Bangkok Orchids Léa Lafugie Traveling Artist From The Early 20th Century Oil On Panel



2 800 EUR

Signature : Léa Lafugie (1890-1972)

Period : 20th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting on wood

Width : 70 cm

Height : 79,5 cm

Description

Oil on panel signed lower right Lafugie, countersigned and titled on the back "Orchidées de Bangkok". The back also bears the stamp of the collector from whom this fine work came. Dimensions of painting 55x46 cm Total dimensions, with frame, 79.5x70 cm. Work in superb original condition. Based on the artist's biography, this work could be dated between 1932 and 1940, the period during which Léa Lafugie lived in Thailand. This work will shortly appear in the catalog raisonné currently being prepared by Sandrine Lapsens. Léa Lafugie occupies a special place in the Far East movement. An artist and explorer, she was one of the first known Western women to undertake expeditions to Southeast Asia in the 1920s, on foot, on horseback or in a pirogue, demonstrating

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boundless courage and an uncommon spirit of adventure, with only her pencils and brushes as weapons, bringing back a multitude of canvases, watercolors and drawings, sometimes landscapes but more often portraits of people from all social classes, offering us a powerful work, an artistic and exceptional ethnographic survey. Born in Paris in 1890 into a bourgeois family from the 7th arrondissement, she benefited from the guidance of her grandfather, a draughtsman at the Ministry of the Navy. She studied art, first at the Paris School of Decorative Arts, then at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Jullian. For ten years, she practiced fashion drawing, nudes, sophisticated hairstyle engraving and portraiture of young women, reflecting the new feminism of the post-war "Roaring Twenties", in the style of Suzanne Valadon, Paul-César Heleu and Louis Icart. Yet it was a very different path that Léa Lafugie chose to follow in 1925, making an abrupt break with the fashions of the time and her European home. Gifted with a strong personality, a constant desire for independence, a curiosity for distant cultures and a taste for great journeys, Léa Lafugie embarked on a life of adventure that few women of her time dared to lead, and on an artistic creation whose limits were constantly being pushed back. Like most Orientalists of the time, she first turned her attention to North Africa during a three-month stay in 1924, during which she produced works that were exhibited in Tunis. But the big departure took place in March 1925, and this time she headed for Asia. The journey lasted five years, with a multitude of stops and countries visited, making her the most extravagant painter-explorer of the 20th century. Ceylon, India, Tibet, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, China and Japan were her stops, always lasting several months. She alternated long periods of solitary exploration in territories where no European had penetrated, with luxurious stays in local aristocratic families or Western diplomatic circles, with the "policy" of being accepted everywhere by offering her

portrait to her hosts, who were seized with curiosity and enchanted by her artistic talent as well as her open-mindedness and understanding of situations. In the course of her expeditions, Léa Lafugie had the opportunity to paint the portraits of such eminent figures as Hiro Hito and Impress Kojun in Japan, the posthumous portrait of the founder of the Republic of China Sun Yat Sen, portraits of powerful Javanese sultans, among the Dayak tribes of Borneo, and later in Sulawesi and Bali. Léa Lafugie married André Decamps in October 1932 - she was already 42 - whom she had met in Siam in 1928, and who gave her lifelong support and respect for her independence and, above all, her insatiable taste for travel. The couple settled in Chiang Rai in northern Thailand (where André Decamps ran a teak-farming business), enabling Léa Lafugie to travel throughout Southeast Asia for ten years, pursuing her work and exhibiting in Saigon, Hanoi, Singapore and Bangkok. After Pearl Harbor, they were forced to settle in Indochina, but were imprisoned in March 1945 when the country was occupied by Japanese troops, and were not repatriated to France until May 1946. The post-war years were devoted to numerous conferences and exhibitions, notably in 1948 in Washington and New York, and to the writing of two books on expeditions to Tibet. One can only admire the woman and the artist, for the courage she demonstrated time and again during her peregrinations, for her ability to integrate into the most upscale as well as the most impoverished circles, and for the organizational qualities such journeys required, with the constant will and ability to paint and draw in all circumstances. He produced a considerable number of works, most of which were donated on the spot but have since disappeared, while the few hundred he brought back to France have been dispersed and only reappear occasionally. Some of his works have been shown at the Musée Cernushi in Paris (exhibition "Du Fleuve Rouge au Mékong") and a major exhibition was also organized in Jakarta in

2016, 85 years after his stay in
Indonesia. Bibliography: Au Tibet, by Léa
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