

Lot 18



Auction Modern, Post War & Contemporary

Date 02.12.2020, ca. 11:18

Preview 27.11.2020 - 10:00:00 bis
30.11.2020 - 18:00:00

MARCOUSSIS, LOUIS
1883 Warsaw - 1941 Cusset

Title: "Nature Morte" (à l'Ananas).

Date: 1920.

Technique: Oil, tempera and sand on canvas.

Measurement : 68,5 x 86cm.

Notation: Signed and dated upper right: MARCOUSSIS 20. Once more signed as well as titled verso on the canvas: MARCOUSSIS nature morte. Here additionally inscribed: exposition Action 1920 No 2.

Frame/Pedestal: Craftman's frame.

Enclosed with the work is a scientific certificate by Prof. Dr. Dariusz Markowski, dated 26.01.2018.

Provenance:

- Galerie Der Sturm (label)
- George Antheil (bought from the above in the early 1920s)
- Private collection USA (through succession)
- Auction Sotheby's, 20th Century Art, 12. November 2014, lot 2
- Private collection Berlin

Exhibitions:

- Galerie Sélection, Brussels 1920 (note verso)
- Galerie Der Sturm, Berlin 1921 or 1922 (here as Nature Morte (label))
- Galerie Libra, Warsaw 2019

Literature:

- Cf. Lafranchis, Jean: Marcoussis, Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre, Paris 1961, cat. rais. no. F37, ill.
- George Antheil: Bad Boy of Music, New York 1945, mentioned on p. 94 and 317.

The odyssey of the wonderful painting by Louis Marcoussis (civil name Ludwik Markus) offered here begins in Berlin. There the previous owner, the famous pianist and composer George Antheil, acquires this and other paintings of his collection in the gallery "Der Sturm". In December 1922, through the mediation of the gallery owner Eva Weinwurstel,

he is also introduced to the Hungarian beauty Boski Markus, who later becomes his wife. (Cf. George Antheil: *Bad Boy of Music*, New York 1945, pp. 45-52)

In his autobiography, Antheil describes his preference for acquiring paintings, and explains this after a highly profitable concert in Prague as follows "I went out immediately and bought a number of very beautiful paintings at ridiculously low prices, including two Marcoussis, one Braque and two Kubins. In this way I became an amateur collector at one fell swoop, occasionally adding to 'my collection' as my concert life became more and more successful. (Antheil, p. 94)

The later fate of the Antheil Collection is all the more surprising. When Antheil left Berlin for Paris in 1923, he collected the paintings and sent them back to America for safekeeping. However, as he tells humorously, he could not remember to whom he had sent them (Antheil, p. 94). A whole sixteen years later the mystery is solved when he receives the following letter from Mary Louise Bok, his early patroness in Philadelphia: "Dear George: I am moving from my large Merion house to a smaller establishment in the city. During the move we discovered a large box in the basement with the words "Hold for George Antheil". I remember now that you had sent it to me in 1923; you asked me to keep it for you. From Berlin, I think. It looks as if it might contain paintings. Do you still want it? If so, I wish you would ask for it immediately, because my new cellar in Philadelphia is really too small. (Antheil, p. 246). The musician, who has been living in Hollywood since 1936, was delighted to be reunited with his valuable works of art (see comparison p. 246).

The work offered here shows Marcoussis' very typical pictorial language of the Cubist still lifes created around 1920. After a personal crisis and a three-year creative break, Ludwik Markus met the literary great and his later namesake Apollinaire in Paris in 1910. This acquaintance gave him the opportunity to establish contacts with the Montmartre artists in order to explore their new painting styles. Inspired by Picasso and Braque, Marcoussis found his way to Cubism, of which he is said to be one of the most important pioneers. In a comparative way he takes everyday objects, places them dynamically in the picture in an abstracted way and thus creates wonderful movements in his works. The addition of sand to his colours also raises the paintings to a more haptic level. In the present work "Nature Morte" we find all these characteristics and also the very typical limited colour palette of Marcoussi of that time. "Nature Morte" is thus a wonderful example of Marcoussi's intensive study of form.

Estimate: 70.000 € - 90.000 €
