



EMIL NOLDE

(Nolde 1867–1956 Seebüll)

Doppelbild (Sie seltsames Licht). 1918.

Oil on canvas.

Signed lower right: Emil Nolde.

60.6 x 56.2 cm.

Provenance: - Urban Kraut, Braunschweig. - Albrecht Haselbach, Munich, circa 1925. - Richard L. Feigen & Co., New York, 1957. - Galerie Grosshenning, Dusseldorf. - Franz Heinrich Ulrich, Dusseldorf, acquired from the above. - Christie's, London, 23 June 2015, lot 49. - Private collection Switzerland, acquired from the above. Exhibited: - Frankfurt a. M. 1957, Emil Nolde, Kunstkabinett Hanna Bekker vom Rath, July - August 1957, no. 3 (with ill., „Doppelbildnis (Paar) um 1920“). - New York 1958, Emil Nolde,

Koller Auktionen - Lot 3222***A187 Impressionist & Modern Art - Friday 07 December 2018, 04.00 PM**

The New Gallery, September - October 1958, no. 6 ("Old Man with Wife 1915").

Literature: - Urban, Martin: Emil Nolde. Werkverzeichnis der Gemälde, vol. II

(1915-1951), Munich 1987, p. 175, no. 810 (with ill.). - Heuser, Margret: Ein Leben mit

der Kunst. Wilhelm Grosshenning, Dusseldorf 1986, p. 52 (with ill). In addition to the landscapes of his North German homeland, portraits comprise the second major theme in the works of Emil Nolde. They not only occupy a large portion of his oeuvre, they also reflect his special interest in the human psyche. Nolde was not a portraitist of the

classical sense, but rather was in search of an expression of the psychological image of his sitters, who were often friends and close relatives. His interests also included Biblical and mythical themes, and a significant number of his figural representations in such

works are depictions of pairs. The Kunsthalle in Emden dedicated a 2006/2007

exhibition to the theme "Emil Nolde - Paare" (Emil Nolde - Pairs), which presented many important works from the Nolde Stiftung, such as Bruder und Schwester (Brother and Sister), also painted in 1918. In Nolde's early work, the figural pairs are still found within

the setting of a landscape. From 1910 onwards, he took the decisive step towards focusing on the upper body and face of the sitters. While the half-length double portrait has been the usual form of representation of married couples since the late Middle

Ages, Nolde's versions focus on depicting the fundamental nature of various human

attachments. In Doppelbild (Sie seltsames Licht), Nolde presents us with a double

portrait of a man and a woman in warm and expressive tones, executed in thick and

generous brushstrokes. The artist gives us no indication as to the identity of the pair or

how they relate to one another. Their individual identities do not play a significant role,

just as the case in his mask pictures or the documentations of the South Pacific voyage that he undertook with his wife Ada in 1913-14. Here, he is more concerned with the

typification of the relationship between the two. The sitters are arranged closely together and compositionally blend into one another through differing profile views. A magician of

colour, Nolde painted the eyes of both in deep blue, the lips in strong red, and the faces in streaks of yellows, thus emphasising the essential unity of the two through the use of

colour. Their differences

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are also visually expressed through a variety of compositional devices. The man is depicted in side profile, the woman before him in three-quarter. They look in different directions. She wears blue, he red. As with most of Nolde's pictures of pairs, he consciously and very skillfully plays with the ambiguity underlying the double portrait. A fitting insight of the present Doppelbild is provided by Nolde himself in a description of his works in his memoirs: "I cannot rewrite my pictures. In the painting itself is said what I could say. Only in general perhaps can I add a little. Duality had received a large space in my pictures and also in the graphic works. Together or against each other: man and woman, pleasure and sorrow, deity and devil. The colours were also contrasted: cold and warm, light and dark, dull and strong. Most of the time, however, after a colour or a harmony had been struck as if it were natural, one colour determined the other, quite emotionally and thoughtlessly touching into all the glorious colours of the palette, in pure sensual devotion and joy of creation. The form was nearly defined in a few structural lines before the colour had a further impact in shaping a secure sentiment. Colours, the material of the painter: colours in their own lives, weeping and laughing, dream and happiness, hot and holy, like love songs and eroticism, like songs and chorales!" (Nolde, Emil: Jahre der Kämpfe, Cologne 2002, p. 200).

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A187 Impressionist & Modern Art - Friday 07 December 2018, 04.00 PM

