

KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts

Hans Reinhold Lichtenberger

1876 Berlin - 1957 Munich

Hans Reinhold Lichtenberger broke off his studies in architecture and left his home town of Berlin in 1897 to train as a painter in Munich. He enrolled at a private art school run by the genre painter and portraitist Heinrich Knirr where he struck up a friendship with Paul Klee, a fellow pupil. Lichtenberger quickly forged contacts with kindred spirits in Schwabing, a vibrant neighbourhood of Munich popular with artists and intellectuals. In 1901, he exhibited at the Munich Secession for the first time. Before long, established artists like Lovis Corinth were alerted to his painting and lauded his burgeoning talent. He moved into a studio on the Giselastrasse in Schwabing where Alexej von Jawlensky and Marianne von Werefkin were his neighbours. Werefkin lauded him as a colourist and Alfred Kubin noted: *"You have a unique and wonderful way of seeing the festive in life ...- floral, lustrous grace magically lit, so mysteriously enticing - which only an unspoiled, most yearnful eye sees and only a practiced master hand can fashion."*

Lichtenberger's strong interest in opera, theatre and cabaret dated back to his youth but it was classical ballet that really captured his imagination. It was to be the central theme of his creative work. In fluidly sketched drawings, delicate watercolours and vibrant gouaches he sensitively evoked the world of dance, depicting the graceful bodies of the ballerinas, their elegant movements, gestures and poses and the sophisticated choreographic patterns of their dancing. The particular charm of his work lies on the one hand in his subtle evocation of fleeting detail and on the other, in his impressionistic handling of the interplay of light and shadow. These are the qualities that make his figures come alive and energize the atmosphere of his dance floors and stages.

His highly expressive portrayal of three iconic dancers – the pioneering American Loïe Fuller, the Spanish actress La Belle Otéro and the Russian prima ballerina Anna Pavlova – provides a striking counterpoint. Their cutting-edge performances, like those of other international stage stars, revolutionized dance in Germany in the years around 1900. Whenever the opportunity arose, be it at the Wintergarten in Berlin or at the Deutsches Theater in Munich, Lichtenberger would watch them perform and carefully record his impressions.

He also excelled in the depiction of architectural and genre motifs. He found many of his preferred subjects in his adopted home town – scenes on Munich's elegant Ludwigstrasse, Sunday strollers in the Englischer Garten or the vibrant hubbub of Oktoberfest crowds.

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Lichtenberger played a prominent role in the artistic life of Munich in the first half of the twentieth century. He was revered and respected as a professor at the Munich Academy of Art, a co-founder of the New Munich Secession and a member of the art association Neue Gruppe. Important one-man exhibitions at three leading Munich galleries – Galerie Heinemann, Galerie Günther Franke and the Kunstverein München – accorded his *oeuvre* the highest mark of recognition. Examples of his work are held in virtually all the major public collections in the city.