

# WILLOW GALLERY



## Décor pour les Ballets Russes

Raoul Dufy (1877 - 1953)

Gouache and watercolor on paper, signed. Painted c.1933

Paper size: 18.5 x 25.5in / 47 x 65cm

Frame size: 29 x 36in / 73 x 91cm

### PROVENANCE

Alex, Reid & Lefevre (The Lefevre Gallery), London

Private Collection, London (acquired from the above before 1939)

Thence by descent

### LITERATURE

This painting is sold with a photo-certificate from Fanny Guillon-Laffaille and will be included in her forthcoming supplement to the catalogue raisonné of aquarelles currently in preparation.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1877 in Le Havre, Dufy entered the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1900. During this period, he was heavily influenced by Impressionism. He exhibited his work for the first time at the 1901 Salon des Artistes, and then at the Salon des Indépendants in 1903. He also met Berthe Weill in 1902, and began to show his work in her gallery. Dufy received a boost to his confidence when the artist Maurice Denis was one of the first buyers of his work. For the next few years, Dufy painted in the vicinity of Le Havre, made famous by Eugène Boudin and Claude Monet.

In 1905 Dufy saw Matisse's painting 'Luxe, Calme et Volupté' in the Salon des Indépendants and his work became influenced by the Fauves until about 1909 when exposure to the work of Paul Cézanne led him to adopt a more subtle technique. In 1911, he and the couturier Paul Poiret founded the "Petite Usine", a company that printed fashion and decorative textiles. Initially interested in engraving, he then began to work in lithographs and watercolours before moving into ceramics alongside the Catalan artist Llorens Artigas. He also illustrated books.

After also showing interest in cubism, Dufy finally began to develop his own distinctive approach in 1920. Skeletal structures, foreshortened perspective, and thin, quickly-applied washes of colour became his trademark, in a manner he referred to as stenographic.

As subject matter, he chose yachting scenes, views of the French Riviera, parties, and musical events. He had also become fascinated with horseracing, which developed into one of his main subjects. Dufy initially focused on the fashionable racegoers, but soon also became fascinated by the racing itself. The colour and atmosphere of horseracing gave Dufy the opportunity to use and explore his 'colour-light' technique, which put the focus on using colour rather than black and white to imply light and shade. Throughout his career, the colour blue was a constant presence in his work. As he once remarked, 'Blue is the only colour which maintains its own character in all its tones...it will always stay blue...whereas yellow is blackened in its shades, and fades away when lightened: red when darkened becomes brown, and diluted with white is no longer red, but another colour - pink'. During this period, Dufy was prolific, working in a variety of materials producing ceramics, tapestry hangings, and large-scale architectural decorations.

Dufy's success continued to grow, and in 1937 he (with the help of his brother Jean) was asked to create what was then the largest painting in the world for the Electricity Pavilion at the Universal Exhibition. 'La Fée Electricité' covers over 600 square meters, and was donated the Musée d'Art Moderne by Électricité de France and installed in 1964.

Despite the onset of rheumatoid arthritis, Dufy exhibited in the annual Salon des Tuileries during the late 1940's and early 1950s and was awarded the grand prize for painting at the 26th Venice Biennale in 1952, the year before his death.

Today, Dufy's work is held in the collections of the Musée D'Orsay in Paris, the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and many others.

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