

Adolf Schill, View of the Northern transept in San Marco with a column and a Byzantine holy water font, 1886, watercolor, pen and gouache, mounted on cardboard, 44.8 x 33.5 cm, not signed, unframed. From the artist's estate.

The picture was provided – in museum quality – with a new passe-partout (80 x 60 cm) of the company HALBE. A fitting frame – in museum quality – with museum glass (anti-reflective, very high UV protection, anti-static, abrasion resistant) of the company HALBE can be provided on request.

Adolf Schill (1848 Stuttgart - 1911 Düsseldorf) shaped the late phase of the Düsseldorf School of Painting as an architect, interior designer, designer of arts and crafts objects and professor at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, but above all he is considered one of the most important architectural painters of his time.

After attending the Polytechnic in Stuttgart, he was involved in the construction of the Vienna Ringtheater under Emil von Förster (1838-1909) before embarking on a two-year study trip through Italy - a country that would continue to fascinate him throughout his life. From 1876, he was editor of the magazine *Gewerbehalle*, and in 1880 (and until his death in 1911) he became Professor of Decoration and Ornamentation at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. He taught generations of students there - his most important pupils included the painter Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1875-1958) and the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881-1919). His marriage in 1882 to Emilie Simons (1858-?), who came from a wealthy banking family - the Köhler/Simons villa in Elberfeld is still owned by the Simons family today - produced, among others, the painter Lore Uphoff-Schill (1890-1968). Schill was a member of the *Malkasten* artists' association and was a frequent jury member for public tenders for monuments, new buildings and interiors. After his death, a large memorial exhibition was dedicated to him in 1912.

As an artist, the multi-talented Adolf Schill excelled in various fields. As an architect, his "most important work [...] is the architectural design of the Rhine Bridge in Düsseldorf" according to the magazine *Die Werkstatt der Kunst* (11.1911/12). Another highlight is the construction of the Villa Leiffmann for Moritz Leiffmann (1853-1921), the co-founder of the banking house B. Simons & Co. - a relative of Schill's wife Emmy - a palatial house surrounded by large parks on the banks of the Rhine in Düsseldorf, which was a center of glamorous conviviality in the pre-war period. As a craftsman, he designed the silver table decorations that the Prussian Rhine Province and the Province of Westphalia presented to the German crown prince and princess for their wedding in 1881 and about which the *Kunstgewerbeblatt* (19.1908) raved that these table decorations "have found enthusiastic recognition on all sides even in recent times".

Over time, Adolf Schill also increasingly established himself as a painter and exhibited successfully in Berlin, Dresden and Düsseldorf, among other places. The magazine *Die Kunst für alle* (23.1907/08) praised him on the occasion of the German National Art Exhibition in Düsseldorf in 1907: "The watercolors by Adolf Schill also offer rare pleasure." The renowned journal *Kunstchronik* (23.1888) had already written on the occasion of a Düsseldorf exhibition in 1888: "The extraordinarily rich collection of watercolors exhibited by Adolf Schill marks the transition from landscape to architecture. Since the exhibition of architectural drawings at Kantianplatz in Berlin, which provided an unexpected insight into the artistic activity of German architectural practitioners, Schill's outstanding importance as a watercolorist has been beyond doubt. It was in particular his bold and free mastery of technique, the power of his painterly conception, which even then ensured that his works, some of which appear here

again, were recognized above all others. Since that time, the artist has dared to take on ever larger and more extensive tasks with the greatest success. Today he is as much an architectural painter as an architect, and seems intent on competing with the landscape painters."

Schill created several views of the Basilica of San Marco in Venice. The most famous of these is the watercolor *In der Markuskirche*, which was purchased by Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941) at the Great Berlin Art Exhibition in 1904, but was already sold on by Lempertz in 1912. The watercolor offered here, which, like other works produced in San Marco, was probably created during a stay in Venice in 1886, reflects Adolf Schill's very individual approach to the hyper-prominent building of St. Mark's Basilica, namely from the perspective of an architectural painter who also worked as an architect and designer of decorative arts.

The sheet therefore does not show one of the usual standard views of San Marco, but offers a view from the northern transept towards the nave, which is not visible. Instead, a marble wall decoration can be seen in the background and the passageway to the atrium with the Porta dei Fiori on the right. However, the mosaic floor with cosmatesque elements from the early 12th century, the characteristically veined marble column on its pedestal and, above all, the extraordinary holy water font, which was placed on a short marble column, form the absolute focal point of the display. Probably of Byzantine origin, it features four angels with wings, their outstretched arms supporting a continuous relief band. Schill's very personal interest in architectural and decorative forms led to this extraordinary view and makes the watercolor offered here something unique.