

Adolf Seel, Portrait of an Oriental Man, 1874, watercolor, ink and pen on paper, mounted on cardboard, signed lower left "A. Seel" and lower right "Cairo 1874".

The picture was provided – in museum quality – with a new passe-partout and a new frame (60 x 40 cm) with museum glass (anti-reflective, very high UV protection, anti-static, abrasion resistant) of the company HALBE.

Adolf Wolfgang Seel (1829 Wiesbaden - 1907 Dillenburg) is considered the most outstanding architectural painter of the Düsseldorf School of Painting and was one of the founders of the famous artists' association *Malkasten*. After studying at the Düsseldorf Academy (1843-1849) under Karl Ferdinand Sohn (1805-1867), during which time he became friends with important painters such as Ludwig Knaus (1829-1910), Wilhelm Busch (1832-1908) and Anselm Feuerbach (1829-1880), who painted portraits of him, he continued his studies in Paris (1864) and Venice (1865). He traveled to Spain, Portugal and North Africa (1870/71) and to the Middle East in 1873 and '74. His architecturally accurate depictions of Arab, Moorish and Byzantine buildings in particular made him famous and influenced subsequent generations of architectural painters. He was awarded the Prussian Crown Order (1869), the Archduke Carl Ludwig Medal and the Great Golden Medal of the City of Vienna (1876) and was an honorary member of the Société Royale Belge des Aquarellistes.

Seel's outstanding depiction of an Arab, which - as he himself noted on the sheet - was painted in Cairo in 1874, is based on his own travel experiences on location, which sets him apart from many Orientalist painters. The portrait is not only painted with artistic verve and great attention to detail - note the elegant beard or the slight tear in the lower lip of the mouth - but also with great sensitivity for the dignity of the person depicted. There is nothing disavowing or caricaturing in the depiction of this dignified, slender character head, whose name we do not know. On the contrary: the sheet testifies to Seel's genuine interest in other cultures, in the Orient and its inhabitants.

Works by Adolf Seel can be found in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Museum Kunstpalast Düsseldorf and the Museum Wiesbaden, among others. Whether the "Portrait. M. Lempertz "Portrait. Bust portrait of a young Arab with turban", labeled as "Fine hand drawing, ink and chalk", with almost the same dimensions as the present watercolour, cannot be verified, but is probable. The sheet has been sold in recent decades at Bonhams, Millon - Cornette de Saint Cyr and Hampel, among others.