

# Betty Elzea Frederick Sandys' Head of an Oriental

It is true that works of art often appear in the most unexpected places. This early work by the English 19th century artist Frederick Sandys, who is well known in his country of birth but is virtually unknown in Germany, must have for a long lost reason travelled to a German destination a very long time ago. It was recently rediscovered in South Germany by a knowledgeable German art collector. Although the quality of the painting is excellent, there was no signature or any indication of whom the artist might be.

However, research found a related drawing by Frederick Sandys which had been sold at an English auction house in recent years. Following this and correspondence with a London gallery and a professor from the University of East Anglia, the collector eventually found me, the owner of the drawing and author of the Catalogue Raisonné of the work of Frederick Sandys (published in 2001).

The two art works are exactly similar in every way including the size, revealing that from his early work onwards, Sandys had established his method of working. This was to make a finished drawing, and if there was a possibility of selling a version painted in oils, he would trace the drawing and transfer the outlines of the image to a suitable support for oil paint, and complete it as a painting, as in the two works discussed here: the preliminary drawing, and the oil painting.

The subject, "Head of an Oriental" (the exact title is lost but this will suffice) fits with the renewed interest of the art world in eastern subject matter. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, travel was possible again to the Mediterranean countries and the Middle East, and many artists went there to study the habits and costumes of the inhabitants of this Moslem world, to enable them to accurately illustrate their pictures. European collectors were attracted by the novel subject matter, and a new school of painting became established, which has been named since by historians of art as "The Orientalists". It has to be said that the usually impoverished Sandys never travelled further from the shores of England than the nearby Low Countries, but in the very active London art world there were several drawing societies set up by artists in which they could draw from the model. Frequently, especially after the British involvement in the Crimean War (1853-1856) when there was a renewed interest in the East, ethnically Eastern models could be hired to pose. This "Head of an Oriental" originated in such a setting.



Frederick Sandys, Head of an Oriental, schwarze, weiße und braune Kreide auf getöntem Papier, um 1856/57, Elzea Collection, England

## 131 Anthony Frederick Augustus Sandys

Norwich 1829 – 1904 Kensington

Head of an Oriental. Um 1856/57

Öl auf Leinwand auf Pappe. 34,2 × 26,8 cm  
(13 ½ × 10 ½ in.). Werkverzeichnis: Nicht bei Elzea.  
Kleine Retuschen. [3490] Gerahmt.

EUR 5.000–7.000

USD 5,490–7,690

