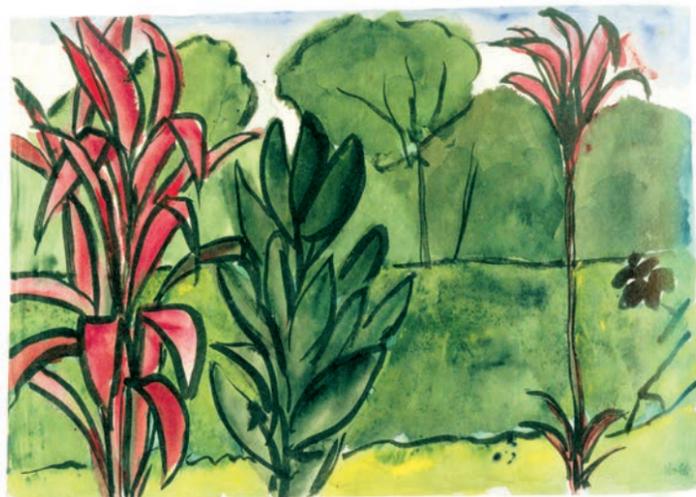




Christian Ring Fascinating Tropics – how a journey to the South Seas enchanted Emil Nolde and enriched the arts

"All the richness you have seen on this journey will stay with you forever," wrote Emil Nolde about his journey to the South Seas (quote from: Emil Nolde: Welt und Heimat. Cologne, Dumont Verlag, vol. III, p. 146f.) From early October 1913 until late summer 1914, he and his wife Ada accompanied the Reichskolonialamt of Berlin on their "Medical-Demographic German-New Guinea Expedition" as unofficial participants, which took them to New Guinea, then a German colony. For Nolde this trip was a dream come true. He had hopes of encountering an exotic iteration of "absolute originality", something he cherished greatly. And indeed this lengthy journey, and the extraordinary visual experiences of tropical nature and foreign cultures that entailed, echoes throughout Nolde's art. Even today, his paintings reveal the artist's insights and fascination with the unknown.



Emil Nolde: Green landscape. South Seas 1913/14. Watercolour and ink. Seebüll, Stiftung Ada und Emil Nolde

In his painting "Südsee Landschaft II" ("South Sea Landscape II") he placed three palm trees in the foreground on the right half of the image. From there the viewer's gaze looks out upon a wide, infinite jungle, with

dense vegetation formed in shades of blues and greens with the simple stroke of the brush. The painting does not get lost in detail, but rather creates a landscape by broadly applying oil paint, slightly alluding to a yellow-green lake. This could be what Nolde described as a "deep, six-meter wide earth trench with Sulphur-yellow water" which surfaced after an earthquake near Rabaul (loc. cit., p. 60). The town, surrounded by volcanoes and forested mountains, was the headquarters of the governor of German New Guinea. In the distant horizon a volcano and its rising cloud of smoke melts into the sky's deep blue. With this painting, Nolde unfolds the idyllic beauty and powerful nature of the South Seas in harmonious beauty, without posing it as a threat. Instead, he spreads out a peaceful landscape, in which the viewer's gaze can get lost in the colourful expanse.



Lot 18

Ada and Emil Nolde were making their homeward journey when they were surprised by the outbreak of the First World War. All their luggage, including boxes with paintings he had created in the South Seas, were confiscated by the English in Port Said. Nolde wrote "we only managed to keep a portfolio with my watercolours of the South Seas" (loc. cit., p. 127). Detours brought Ada and Emil Nolde back to Germany in August of 1914. It was not until seven years later, in 1921, that the presumed lost paintings were discovered in a warehouse in the port city of Plymouth, and Nolde was able to buy them back.

The recovered drawings and watercolours provided Nolde with significant inspiration for the paintings he created to replace those he thought he had lost. Among these works is "Südsee Landschaft II" from 1915, which refers to a previously made postcard-sized pen and ink drawing (see ill.), testifying that the painting's composition had already been formed. By transferring it to a large format, vibrantly coloured oil painting, Nolde attempted to capture a "magical world, otherwise unknown to man" (loc. cit., p. 66).



Emil Nolde: Landscape with volcano. South Seas 1913/14. Pen drawing. Seebüll, Stiftung Ada und Emil Nolde

18 Emil Nolde

Nolde 1867 – 1956 Seebüll

“Südsee Landschaft II”. 1915

Oil on canvas. 73 × 88 cm (28 ¾ × 34 ¾ in.). Signed lower left: Emil Nolde. Signed and titled on the upper stretcher bar in black: Emil Nolde “Südseelandschaft” II. Catalogue raisonné: Urban 717. [3062] Framed.

Provenance

Walter Beyer, Neubabelsberg (1928) / Rudolf Probst, Dresden/Mannheim / Joachim Probst, Mannheim (1968) / Private collection, Southern Germany (on loan to the Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim since at least 1989)

EUR 800,000–1,200,000

USD 860,000–1,290,000

Exhibition

Ausstellung neuerer deutscher Kunst aus Berliner Privatbesitz. Berlin, Nationalgalerie, 1928, cat. no. 143 / Emil Nolde. Stuttgart, Württembergischer Kunstverein, 1987/88, p. 242, cat. no. 63, ill. p. 77 / Da Van Gogh a Schiele. Verona, Palazzo Forti, 1989, ill. p. 167

- Masterpiece of Die Brücke expressionism
- First time on the auction market
- On loan for many years at the Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim
- Idyllic beauty and powerful nature in harmonious unity

All the richness you have seen on this journey will stay with you forever

Emil Nolde

