

Corfu Town from Vido with Agioi Deka in the distance

Edward Lear

Sold



Description

Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Corfu Town from Vido with Agioi Deka in the distance

Signed lower right: Edward Lear del. 1856 and inscribed lower centre: Corfu from Vido
Watercolour and bodycolour over pencil on buff paper
30 by 46 cm., 11 ³/₄ by 18 in.

Provenance:
Private Collection

Literature:
Edward Lear & the Ionian Islands, exhibition catalogue, 2012, p.91, ill. and p.129

Exhibited:
Corfu Museum of Asian Art, Edward Lear & the Ionian Islands, 25th May to 31st August 2012

Lear first visited Corfu in the summer of 1848 and fell in love with the beauty of the island. He returned in November 1855 to set up home in Corfu town. Dominating the town was the citadel with its ancient 'double-crowned' twin forts on two small peaks, captivated Lear who felt 'a more picturesque object can hardly exist'. Fortified in the 12th Century by the Byzantines, the western fortification was called the Castel a Terra, or the Castel Nuova. The eastern peak, linked to the Western peak by a series of walls, was known as Castel a Mare, or Castel Vecchio. These ancient fortifications demonstrate the island's key strategic position on the trade route between Europe and the Levant.

This is a view of Corfu Town from the north. In the distance Agioi Deka, the island's second largest mountain, is visible, rising 576m above sea level. It dominates its surroundings and inspired numerous artists and writers, including Oscar Wilde, who penned his celebrated 'Santa Decca', inspired by his visit to the mountain in 1877. The present finished watercolour is typical of the watercolours that Lear worked up in his studio, rather than the more freely executed, annotated, plein-air studies. The delicate, carefully depicted flowers in the foreground, clinging to the rocky foreshore on which they grow demonstrates Lear's abiding fascination with the myriad varieties of the natural world. He often wrote about the wealth of the flora and fauna of Corfu in his letters to his friends and family.