

Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

Edward Lear

Sold



Description

Edward Lear (1812-1888)
Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

Inscribed lower right: Venice Nov. 15. 1865. 4.30.PM (24) and lower left: SM. Salute deep purple
Pen and brown ink and watercolour over traces of pencil
15.9 by 25.2 cm., 6 ¼ by 9 ¾ in.

Despite living in Italy for large periods of his life, Lear only made two visits to Venice. His first trip had been in 1857 and his second November 1865, when the artist was en route to Malta, to make a series of studies for a painting commissioned by his great friend and patron, Frances Lady Waldegrave (1821-1879). His first visit to the city had not been a success; writing to Ann, his sister on 23rd May 1857, he stated, 'I may as well shock you a good thumping shock at once by saying I don't care for it a bit. I never wish to see it again'. (Vivien Noakes ed, *Edward Lear Selected Letters*, 1988, p. 147). In 1865 he found the city far more to his liking. In a letter to Edward Drommond, he described Venice as 'this city of palaces, pigeons, poodles & pumpkins...is a wonder and a pleasure'. (A. Davidson, *Edward Lear*, 2nd ed. 1950, p. 159). He was captivated by the light, the dramatic sunsets and the play of light on the water and on the architecture. In his diary for November 16th, he wrote, 'Anything so incredibly beautiful as the colour of the place I never saw, perhaps Cairo and parts of Constantinople'. (*Edward Lear diaries 1858-1888*, Mss Eng. 793.3 (8) Houghton Library Harvard University Cambridge Mass. Seq. 164).

In his diary for the day that the present watercolour was drawn Lear wrote, '7th day at Venice. Slept well - & rose about 6.30. The early dawn is wonderful here - with black sails against the bright orange horizon...The Venetians are most courteous & amiable & it is the nicest town to draw in I was ever in...from 11.30 to 4.30 worked hard at planning out the architecture of the drawings I have begun...Was there ever such a place of sunsets? Such gorgeous colour?' (*Edward Lear diaries 1858-1888*, *ibid*).