

# Kâ-Mondo

## A SELF-PORTRAIT BY ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY TO BE OFFERED AT AUCTION

AUCTION ON THURSDAY 4 JUNE 2020 AT DROUOT



Antoine de SAINT-EXUPÉRY - *Self-portrait as The Little Prince hanged, on the Earth planet; in the background, a couple entwined on a bench, on a planet called « Fox MGM »*  
Ink and watercolor on paper | 27 x 21 cm | circa 1942/43  
Estimate: €60,000-80,000

Expert: Ludovic Miran

Among its Books and Manuscripts auction on June 4, Auction House Kâ-Mondo will feature important drawings by Antoine de SAINT-EXUPÉRY (1900-1944) at Drouot, Paris. The main drawing, also the most emotional, shows a self-portrait of the writer as the Little Prince, hanged, expressing the pain of a break-up. Another drawing depicts ten preparatory sketches to *The Little Prince*, executed circa 1942.

*Self-portrait as The Little Prince hanged, on the Earth planet; in the background, a couple entwined on a bench, on a planet called « Fox MGM »* is an original watercolor on paper that Antoine de Saint-Exupéry drew in New York in 1942 or early 1943. It is estimated between 60,000 and 80,000 Euros. Undoubtedly, this is the most upsetting of all Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's drawings. Indeed, the corpus of his drawings known to date offers only a very small number of compositions of such seriousness, and none shows such great despair, although many of them evoke serious themes. This astonishing composition illustrates the novelist's despair as he takes the decision to leave New York and move away from his friend Silvia Hamilton.



The main figure, in the foreground on the right, depicts the Earth, on which is a figure hanging from a gallows: it is Saint-Exupéry himself, represented in the costume and attitude of the Little Prince. At the top left of the composition, on another planet called « FOX MGM », a couple is depicted entwined on a bench. These two planets are part of a space studded with four stars, with the planet Saturn at the top.

One could wonder about the choice of this planet, associated by poets with melancholy, and by astrologers, to rupture and renunciation.

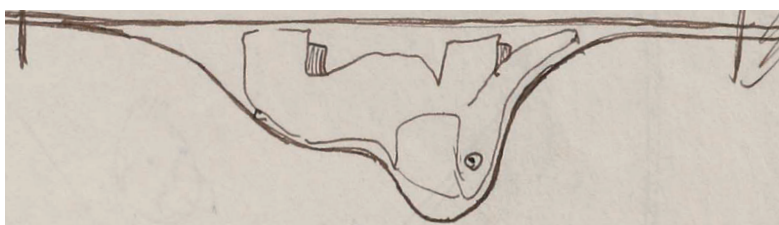
Saint-Exupéry went into exile in the United States in 1941. During his stay in New York, he had an intense romantic friendship with Silvia Hamilton. In the spring of 1943, before leaving for North Africa, and just



after the publication of *The Little Prince*, the novelist offered his friend Silvia the original manuscripts of his masterpiece, as well as an exceptional set of preparatory drawings and studies to illustrate this philosophical tale. Silvia Hamilton sold *The Little Prince's* autograph manuscript along with numerous drawings to the Morgan Library in 1968; she sold others in Paris in 1976, including this one.

✧ This sheet can be interpreted in light of Silvia Hamilton's relationship with Gottfried Reinhardt her future husband – they got married in March 1944 – represented by the entwined couple. G. Reinhardt was a producer and worked in the film industry, hence the presence of the planet « FOX MGM ». Saint-Exupéry, deeply wounded by this affair, would illustrate here his emotional despair.

✧ Another hypothesis is put forward by Silvia Hamilton, in her preface to the 1976 sale. She only dwells on this drawing – while many others were presented – assuring that it evokes « the scenes of his cinematic past [from Saint-Exupéry] in Hollywood (*Night Flight*), illustrated by the drawing of two planets, one bearing « Fox-MGM » and the other « Earth », on which, in despair, he hangs himself. » Indeed, the movie adaptation rights for the novel *Vol de nuit* had been sold to Hollywood, and the film directed by Clarence Brown, distributed by the MGM, was released in theaters in 1933. In 1942, *Night Flight* was withdrawn from circulation following a dispute between Saint-Exupéry and MGM.



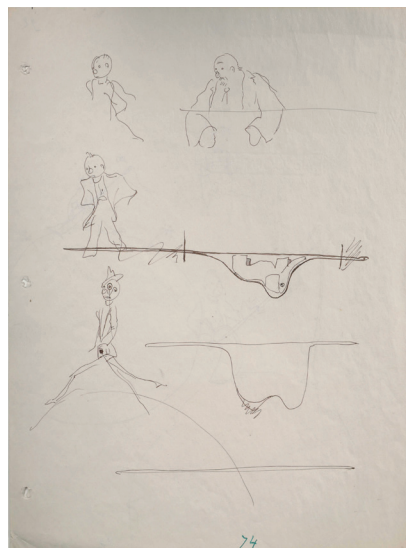
Under the following lot, is a splendid set of 10 original drawings Saint-Exupéry drew in New York in 1942, foreshadowing the illustration of *The Little Prince*. It is estimated 30,000 to 50,000 Euros.

Several important characters of the story are featured among these sketches : the charming eponymous hero of the tale, the lamplighter « so faithful to the instruction » to turn on and off its streetlight « once a minute », as well as the butterfly hunter on his planet that does not appear in the tale after all, and whose original watercolor is kept at the Morgan Library.

On the back of the sheet are seven sketches: one probably shows the businessman, « this man . . . so busy that he did not even raise his head at the arrival of the little prince » (ch. XIII) ; a double study or « drawing of open or closed boa snakes » for the « boa snake that digested an elephant » in which great people,

who « always need explanations » invariably answer « it's a hat » (ch. I) ; and at the bottom of this page is the sketch of a snake « thin as a finger » (ch. XVII). Finally, three other sketches of unidentified characters complete this remarkable sheet, including an elegant dandy.

The morphology with which the Little Prince is characterized, as well as the presence of these characters that were not used to illustrate the tale, specifies, the dating around 1942, making this ensemble a valuable testimony to the genesis and iconographic research of the author of this major work of French literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**PUBLIC AUCTION - DROUOT - SALEROOM 4**  
Thursday 4 June – 1:30pm

**PUBLIC EXHIBITION - DROUOT - SALEROOM 4**  
Tuesday 2 June – 11am / 7pm  
Wednesday 3 June – 11am / 7pm

In the context of the fight against the spread of COVID-19, strict sanitary measures are applied at Drouot. For any interview requests, please contact the Press Office.

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#### **About Drouot**

Founded in 1852, Drouot is the largest auction place in the world ever since. The institution now gathers 60 auction houses and hosted 1 504 live and online auctions in 2019 that totalled €372M. Each year, Drouot welcomes over 600,000 visitors, who browse through the 15 salesrooms which feature the works of art from over 21 categories, from antiquities to street art. The Drouot Group includes several branches, including Auctionspres which publishes the weekly Gazette Drouot and Drouot Digital, the e-commerce platform that offers 'live' services (auction streaming and live bidding) and online-only sales.

Interviews and images upon request.