

CALLISTO FINE ARTS

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Arnaldo Ferraguti (Ferrara, 1862 – Forlì, 1925)

Portrait of a Woman with a Dog

Mixed media on paper displayed on canvas

80 x 50 cm

Signed and dated on the lower right corner: *Ferraguti – ad Emilio Treves – 1911*

This beautiful portrait by Arnaldo Ferraguti shows a moment of everyday life embedded in a dream-like atmosphere. The neat features delineating the three identifiable characters in the

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picture (the dog, the woman and the lamppost in the background) is counterbalanced by the blurred colours defining the setting of the scene. Looking at the painting, the beholder feels first-hand the cold and windy weather which spreads through the paper thanks to the tangible and compact tempera brush strokes mixed with pastels and other media. Finally, the composition is nestled in a turquoise ornated frame which gives an ultimate elegant touch to the portrait.

The painter signs and dates the work on the bottom right corner, dedicating it to Emilio Treves. The painting is probably a portrait of Ferraguti's wife, Olga Treves - Emilio's niece - and their dog walking in Pallanza on the promenade studded with lampposts on the river of Lake Maggiore, where they used to live. This hypothesis is supported by the highly detailed features of the woman's and the greyhound's faces, which stand out in the suspended atmosphere characterising the rest of the painting, hence possibly representing two portraits *dal vero*. Moreover, the work dates back to a period in which Ferraguti was mainly focused on the management of his factory and on his illustrating career. This might suggest that the painting was a gift recalling his union with Treves family through the portrayal of the very person who sealed this link, Olga.

Arnaldo Ferraguti was an important Italian painter of the Verismo movement. He was born in 1862 in Ferrara but moved to Naples with his family at a young age. There, he studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti and was trained by Domenico Morelli, experimenting on historical and orientalist subjects through a warm and dynamic palette. In 1883, he met the painter Francesco Paolo Michetti at the Esposizione Internazionale in Rome. Michetti's verismo strongly influenced Ferraguti, who started exploring the life in the countryside in his studi *dal vero* both in pastel and in oil that he produced during his sojourns in Abruzzo and Lazio.

Through Michetti, Ferraguti met the Treves brothers, Giuseppe and Emilio, two Milanese publishers for whom he started working as illustrator (e.g. see his illustrations for *Cuore* by Edmondo De Amicis and for *Vite dei campi* by Giovanni Verga). In the 1890s he married Olga Treves and they moved to Pallanza where they participated to the intellectual circles in Villa San Remigio and Villa Cordelia, together with Verga and D'Annunzio.

In 1891 Ferraguti presented *Alla Vanga* (today in the Museo del Paesaggio, Pallanza), a gigantic canvas dedicated to agricultural works depicted through an heroic lens. The painting won the important Premio Fumagalli and Ferraguti got consecrated as one of the most important painters in the Verismo movement of the second half of the nineteenth century. Subsequently, he mostly worked in pastel and participated to two Venice Biennali and to a few other exhibitions until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Around 1905, he decided to dedicate his life mainly to illustration and to his entrepreneurial activity in the chemistry field applied to fine arts (e.g. production of artificial parchment and leather). After he sold his activity, he moved to Forlì to become the director of another leather factory and died there in 1925.