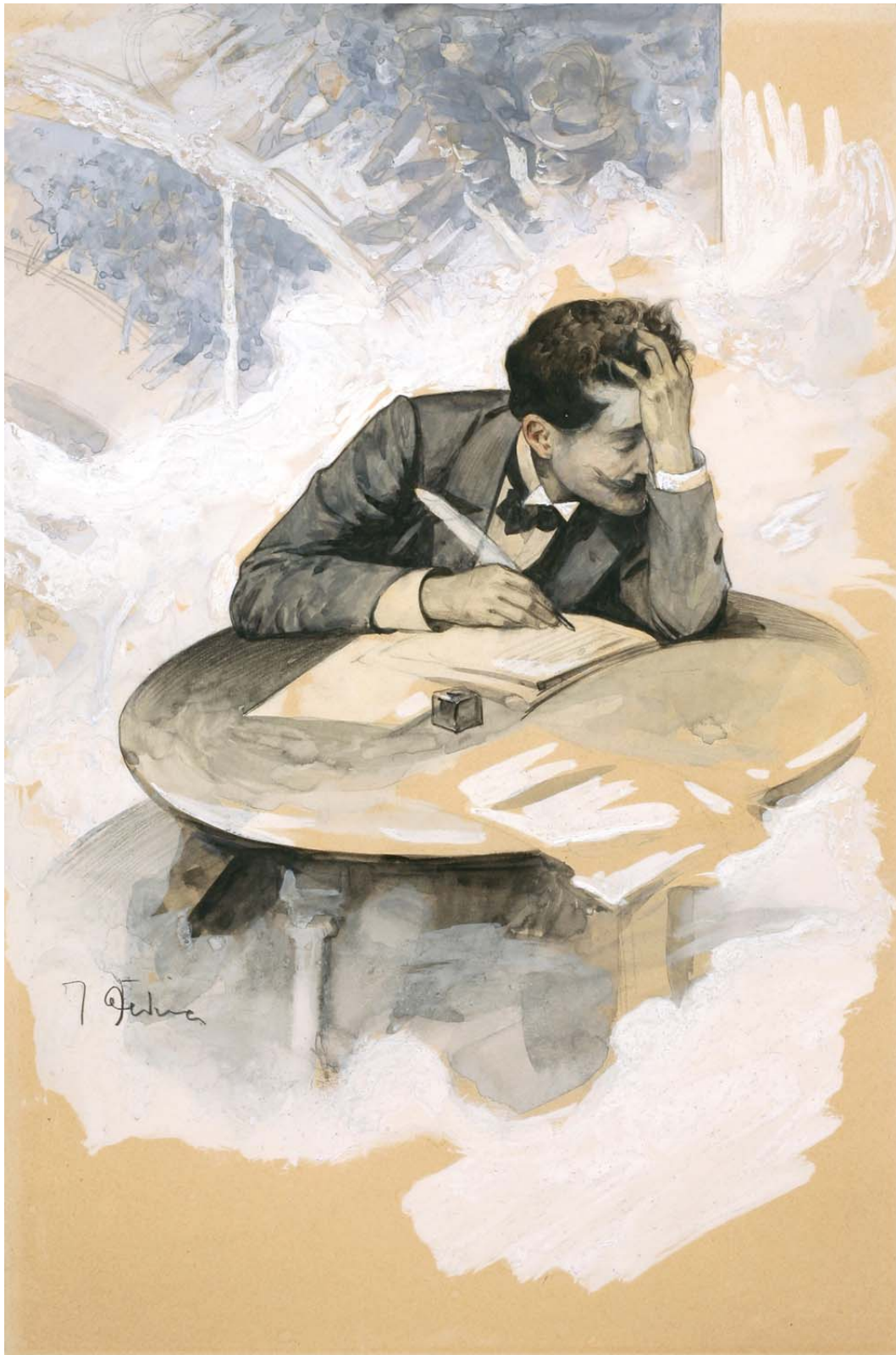


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JAN (JEAN) DEDINA
1870 Straky - Tatobity 1955

Robert de Montesquiou inspiré par sa Muse

Brown and black ink, with gouache; c.1897.
Signed lower left: J Dedina.
350 x 235 mm

PROVENANCE: Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London – Colin Clarke, London – Thence by descent.

LITERATURE: *Fin de siècle*, exhib. cat., Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London, 16 June - 16 July 1999, no. 26 (repr.)

The painter, draughtsman and illustrator Jean Dedina worked in Paris early in his career. Born in the Central Bohemian village of Straky, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he began his training at the School of Applied Arts in Prague under František Ženíšek (1849-1916) and went on to study at the Prague Academy of Fine Art. In 1895, he moved to Paris where he was active in a variety of artistic genres. He worked on large-scale decorative projects for the Comédie-Française and the ceiling of the Petit Palais, and painted portraits and landscapes. He also produced illustrations for journals such as *Le Monde illustré*, a weekly magazine published in France between 1857 and 1940. Dedina also collaborated with Alfons Mucha (1860-1939).

Robert de Montesquiou (1855-1921), the subject of this drawing, was a Symbolist poet and writer. His best-known works are the collections of poems *Les Chauves-Souris* (1892) and *Les Hortensias bleus* (1896). He was also a collector and dandy of considerable notoriety who encapsulated society life in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century. Aristocratic, wealthy, perfectly groomed and exquisitely attired, the arch-aesthete of the Decadent movement, he transformed himself into a work of art as rare and extravagant as the poetry he composed and the bibelots he collected. He represented the dandy *par excellence*. His eccentric mannerisms are strikingly documented in portraits by his contemporaries: A very famous portrait of the *Comte* is the one by Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931) in the Musée d'Orsay [Fig.1]. He appears as a hidden subject in contemporary literature – many of his physiological and psychological traits were immortalised in the figure of the neurotic aesthete Jean des Esseintes in Joris-Karl Huysmans's novel *A rebours* (1884). And he is also thought to have provided an example for the persona of Baron de Charlus in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927).

Montesquiou was a virtuoso poseur whose outrageous taste and studied flamboyance constantly drew the attention of chroniclers and observers. He inspired admiration, irritation and sarcasm. Of all the caricaturists who targeted him, it was Sem (1863-1934) who best captured the essence of his distinctive cavalier elegance [Fig.2]. He was also renowned for his affectation, effeteness and high-pitched falsetto-like voice.

This very fine drawing may have served as a preparatory study for an illustration, perhaps for *Le Monde illustré* which Dedina regularly supplied with genre images. The stylishly dressed Comte receives inspiration from his muse. He sits at a table, paper in front of him, quill in hand, in a state of deep poetic reverie and is transported into a vision of applauding dress circle spectators. A very similar,

smaller-format drawing by Dedina in the same technique is dated 1897 [Fig.3]. The present drawing was very probably executed in the same year.



Fig.1: Giovanni Boldini, *Le Comte Robert de Montesquiou*, 1897, oil on canvas, 116.0 x 82.5 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (Inv. RF 1977 56, LUX 1382, JdeP 249)



Fig.2: Sem (Georges Goursat), *Montesquiou chez Charvet*. Caricature.

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Fig.3 : *Éléphants au club de jeu*, 1897, brown and black ink with gouache, 300 x 245 mm.
Private collection