

1961-- 1962

CHAPTER 56

RETRIEVAL OF ELSE'S PAINTINGS.

I have to go back to the story about Else's paintings. I had mentioned that Henri Mayran had gone with me in Paris to the house, where Else had lived, but that we could not meet her former landlord, Mr. Lapersonne. We were told that he will be in Paris in about two or three days, but since we had to leave for Agay on the French Riviera, I asked Henri Mayran to come and talk to Mr. Lapersonne on my behalf, which he did. When we returned from our vacation in Europe, Henri told me that Mr. Lapersonne was very cooperative and willing to give me the paintings on payment of the money Else owed him. I was very happy about that result and from then on I took over. I wrote to Mr. Lapersonne to his address in St. Jean de Luz in Southern France and told him that my sister had died in the meantime and that I as her heir would pay him what she owed him on handing over of the paintings to me. That letter as well as many other subsequent ones were translated into French by Henri. In his answer

he explained the amount of money he was to receive, including 10% interest and demanded also official documentation that I was the heir. I had to get from Bucharest a death certificate and with the help of a lawyer a document was prepared, notarized, and translated into French. All that took much time. Before that was done, I had gotten in touch with Hedy's cousin Mrs. Suzanne de Montfort in Paris and asked her to help me in this affair. She was willing to do it and told me that she and her husband had planned to come to New York within a short time, where we would discuss the details. They came in March 1961, and there was complete understanding and willingness to do what was necessary. Arrangements were made for a certain date, when Mr. Lapersonne would again be in Paris at the end of May and the telephone number of Suzanne given to him, so that he could arrange the exact hour when he will be in the house in Rue Daguerrre 11, to get the money and hand over the paintings. And Suzanne received from me an amount of money, sufficient to cover the amount Mr. Lapersonne had to receive, and for the packing of the paintings in wooden crates and shipping to New York. Altogether it was an amount of about \$ 600.-.

Everything came about as planned. Suzanne as well as her husband Henri de Montfort went there with a truck of the newspaper "Ici Paris", which they owned; Mr. Lapersonne accepted the document and signed it, the money was paid out to him, and the paintings were put on the truck by the chauffeur. A very good company took over the packing and transportation of the paintings, and they arrived in New York on Septemebr 29th, 1961.

The two big wooden crates were put in my garage in Brooklyn and I started soon to unpack them and bring the paintings, one

by one, into the house. It was quite exciting for me to look at them. Some of them are great works of art. These are the 12 paintings, which she had shown in her last exposition in her own studio at 11, Rue Daguerre, from the 16th to the 22nd of January, 1930. Since the paintings were very big, I hung them up in the attic, where there was enough space on the walls, so that they all could be there together and could be shown to visitors. I have also the folder which was printed for the exposition of these paintings and contained four very enthusiastic critiques of the paintings of her previous expositions. The list of that last exposition contains titles, which are simple like "Paysage printanier", which means "Spring landscape" or "Chez le Photographe", which means "At the photographers". Other titles do not precisely explain what is meant, like the title "Le Prince", which so beautifully depicts Samson and Dalilah. That became evident to me, while I was in the Metropolitan Opera House at a performance of the opera "Samson and Dalilah" by Saint-Saëns. Or the title "Saint au Paysage", which just as well can be called "Tobias and Edna" or "Tobias, Edna, and the archangel Raphael", since that was exactly, what Else described in that painting. That was found out by our cousin Paul Bruell, when he looked at the painting, and he advised me to get the book "Apocrypha", which was once a part of the Bible, and read the "Story of Tobit". That painting is one of the most beautiful of her works. The meaning of other paintings is unclear to me and Paul Bruell, and many others who saw them, and the titles "Statue rêveuse" (Dreaming statue) and "Salut d'une Sainte" (Salvation of a saint) does not explain what is really being depicted. Anyway, all the paintings show something beautiful, be it human beings, animals, or landscapes.

Through all the years that I had the paintings, I had wanted to show them in an exposition, which would have required writing an explanation about Else's life and her work, but I never found the time to do something about it.

I have printed folders of two of Else's expositions, which contain enthusiastic critiques of four prominent art critics. As told before, 30 more of Else's paintings, which were deposited in the art gallery of René Zivy in Paris were lost and will probably never be found. And there are in existence about 9 or 10 of Else's last paintings, which are in Bucharest in Rumania, and which I have seen, when I visited my brother and his family there in 1972, some of them also great works of art, and of which I have photos. I intend to

I intend to do something about all that, as outlined above, in the near future. Now, when writing that, having retired from medical practice, I have the time to prepare it and I intend to approach an art gallery for an exposition.



Else and her studio in Paris,
11 rue Daguerre

