



**19th & 20th Century Paintings and Works
on Paper, including Portrait Miniatures (30
Mar 2021 B)**

Tue, 30th Mar 2021

Lot 348 §

Estimate: £800 - £1200 + Fees

MIKULAS MEDEK (CZECH 1926-1974)

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Visage, rose

signed and dated *MEDEK 67* (lower right)

ink and wash

52.2 x 34 cm (20 1/2 x 13 3/8 in)

PROVENANCE:

Eli Wallitt, Geneva, acquired from the artist in 1969

Medek's startling and disconcerting imagery ensured that he was one of the most original voices within the Czech visual arts to emerge after the Second World War.

The style of this and the following lot bear some comparison with the work of Max Ernst, including the abstraction of figural elements, the essential flatness of the motifs and the artist's innovative use of his medium. But unlike Ernst, whose work always retained an underlying sense of decoration, Medek's rarely incorporated such distractions. Rather they express an unremitting sense of anonymity and dislocation, the facial forms retaining an insistent impersonality.

That Ernst informed Medek's style is not surprising. Prague had been a hot-bed of Surrealist activity since the 1920s. Up until the Second World War and well into the 1950s there were many and diverse exchanges between Surrealists in Paris and their counter parts in Prague. But as divisions and dissensions grew among the group in the post-War years, so Medek retreated from the public gaze to create a wholly new and more inscrutable aesthetic during the 1960s. The tenor of his work reflected the political climate, Medek's anxious imagery a response to the repression of the country during Communist rule, and the hectoring of the Soviet Union in particular.