COLLECTION-DIS-PAINTINGS

PAINTING- Francesc Coradel Cugat- *Sleeping (Waiting) Elephant [Seal]*, ca. 1925-1926

Francesc Coradel Cugat (May 24, 1893–July 13, 1981)[[1]](#footnote-2) *Sleeping (Waiting) Elephant[Seal]*, ca. 1925- 1935. Impressionist oil on canvas of a California hillside known for its shape of sleeping elephant seals that were commonly found on the beaches of southern California in the 1920's and 1930's. Verso: handwritten on the stretcher bars is "'Sleeping (Waiting) Elephant', CA, Francesc Coradel Cugat". The custom, wide, *plein air* style wood and gesso frame, is covered in gold leaf. Ex Nicholas Angelo Fine Art, 4089 Ute Highway, Lyons, CO 80540.

Francesc Coradel Cugat was born in Barcelona, Spain on May 24, 1893, and in 1903 the Cugat family emigrated to Cuba. About 1911-1912 Cugat studied art at Rheims and at l'École des Beaux Arts in Paris where he was under the tutelage of Claude Monet, a founder of French Impressionist painting who espoused the philosophy of expressing one's perceptions outdoors in nature, that came to be known as *plein-air* landscape painting: the actual visual conditions seen at the time of the painting are reproduced. *Plein-air* landscape painting was opposed to studio painting that was based on academic rules to create a programmed look. Monet’s tutelage resurfaced in Cugat’s painting of the *Sleeping (Waiting) Elephant [Seal]* in ca 1925-1926. That is why this painting is so special for it incorporates the natural twisting, action motions of trees that Monet was able to achieve in many of his paintings of poplar trees especially.

However, in 1913 with World War I impending, Francesc Coradel Cugat emigrated to Chicago. There, under the studio tutelage of Cleofonte Campannini, he created distinctive, visually dramatic theatre posters for Chicago Opera Association personalities including Lucien Muratore, Rosa Raisa, Giacomo Rimini and Nellie Melba.[[2]](#footnote-3) Then in 1921 Cugat left Chicago for New York City where on November 28, 1922, he married the painter Ruth Wadler (b. New York), the sister of Lucille Lortel, founder of the White Barn Theatre.[[3]](#footnote-4) In 1924 and early 1925 he painted the famous "Celestial Eyes" that became the book jacket art for F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.[[4]](#footnote-5) Later in 1925 he moved to Hollywood where his brother, Xavier, was a bandleader. His impressionistic paintings of landscapes and abstract portraits and urban scenes were exhibited in Spain, Hollywood, and New York. He was technical color advisor on sixty-eight Hollywood films and was a set designer in Hollywood for Douglas Fairbanks. He died in Westport, Connecticut.

Cugat was a member of the Painters & Sculptors of Los Angeles. Cugat's exhibitions included Stendahl's (Los Angeles), 1924, 1926; Andersen Galleries (NYC), 1929; Little Gallery (San Diego), 1929; East-West Gallery (San Francisco), 1929; Gallery of Modern Art (New York City), 1942. Cugat was a member of the Salons of America and was exhibited widely through them.

1. U.S.Social Security Records [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. *Theatre Magazine*, Volume 27 edited by W. J. Thorold, Arthur Hornblow, Perriton Maxwell, Stewart Beach; 1918, p. 278; San Francisco Chronicle, 7-21-1919, p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Greene, Alexis. 2004. [*Lucille Lortel : the queen of Off Broadway*](http://www.worldcat.org/title/lucille-lortel-the-queen-of-off-broadway/oclc/54029297&referer=brief_results). New York : Limelight Editions. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Tate, Mary Jo (2007). *Critical companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald: a literary reference to his life and work*. New York : Facts On File, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)