

EDOUARD-MARCEL SANDOZ

ABEILLES (circa 1935)

Tiger's eye stone.

H : 4,9 cm, L: 13 cm, D: 7,9 cm

Direct carve signed «Ed M. Sandoz».

Circa 1935



Few sculptors have sublimated bees, creatures as fragile as they are delicate, as Sandoz did. Insects are few and far between in Art Deco bestiaries, with the exception of Marcel L mar's (1892-1941) and rare examples of Frelon and Lucane by Fran ois Pompon (1855-1933). The bee has always had positive symbolism throughout art history, since ancient times; the embodiment of order, royalty and its appropriation, it also shapes nature with its rigorous and immutable geometry.

But in sculpture, how can such a discreet subject be represented without distorting it by changing its format?

The work we present here provides a remarkable answer to this question. It places the foragers in a plausible context offered by tiger's eye stone, a semi-precious stone from South Africa specifically selected by Sandoz. The artist began to familiarise himself with this kind of material and its cuts around the 1920s, when he welcomed into his circle a former worker from the Faberg  workshops, exiled since the October revolution in 1917, who introduced him to this practice. The artist remains fascinated by the technical complexity of this type of cut, which requires constant adaptation of the tools,

but also by its countless plastic and transparency possibilities, constantly playing with illusionism. Sandoz thus gives new impetus to his bestiary, notably by multiplying the number of colourful fish and diverting the matrix of selected stones, which become an integral part of the work by embodying the surrounding algae or plants.

For this new approach, in addition to fish, insects are one of the master's main sources of inspiration, along with frogs, when he imagines mounting them on jewellery in the style of antique cameos and offering them to the women in his circle, in the form of rings or pendants.

All of these aspects are visible in our subject, which combines the delicacy of bees with chromatic illusion. Five bees work on a delicate network of honeycombs, the block of stone shaped like a wax comb oozing honey. The coloured layers of the tiger's eye give this textural illusion, transparent and with a warm light like flowing honey. A network of identical brown layers on another specimen indicates that Sandoz used the initial block for both compositions of Abeilles, each of which is a unique piece.

Artist description:

