



NORBERTINE BRESSLERN- ROTH "THE BIG FISH" 1969

Norbertine Bresslern-Roth, "The big Fish", 1969,
oil on jute, signed

Norbertine Bresslern-Roth is regarded as one of Austria's most important animal painters. Her exceptional talent became evident at an early age: at just ten years old, she was recommended to the art teacher Alfred Schrötter von Kristelli, who mentored her free of charge for many years. During her training, she made frequent visits to Vienna's Schönbrunn Zoo as well as zoological gardens throughout Europe, which served as enduring sources of inspiration and subject matter. Between 1907 and 1911, upon Schrötter's recommendation, she attended the summer courses of animal painter Hans von Hayek in Dachau. In 1911, she began studying under Ferdinand Schmutzer at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna—at a time when women were still denied regular admission to the institution.

Throughout her life, Bresslern-Roth developed an extensive archive of animal studies, sketches, and watercolours that, alongside photographs, formed the basis of her paintings. Her work combines the tradition of sixteenth-century animal painting with a modern, stylized visual language. Characteristic of her paintings is their fresco-like quality, intensified by her distinctive oil-on-jute technique. Soft contours, flattened compositions, and a finely attuned sense of movement lend her works a remarkable expressive power. A journey to Libya in 1928 had a lasting influence on her artistic practice. Thereafter, she increasingly turned to exotic motifs, exploring the flora and fauna of Africa and the South Seas. Many of these imagined landscapes emerged from her own creative vision, informed by memories, sketches, and observations made in zoological gardens.

At the heart of Bresslern-Roth's sensitive oeuvre lies not only a masterful depiction of animals, but also a profound meditation on the harmony between humans, animals, and nature. Her works reflect a deep understanding of the living world and a longing for a respectful coexistence with nature.

The painting *The Great Fish* (1969) depicts a panther catching a fish. The scene is at once powerful and elegant: through dynamic movement and a stylized formal language, Bresslern-Roth transforms the moment into a timeless symbol of primal strength and natural vitality.







