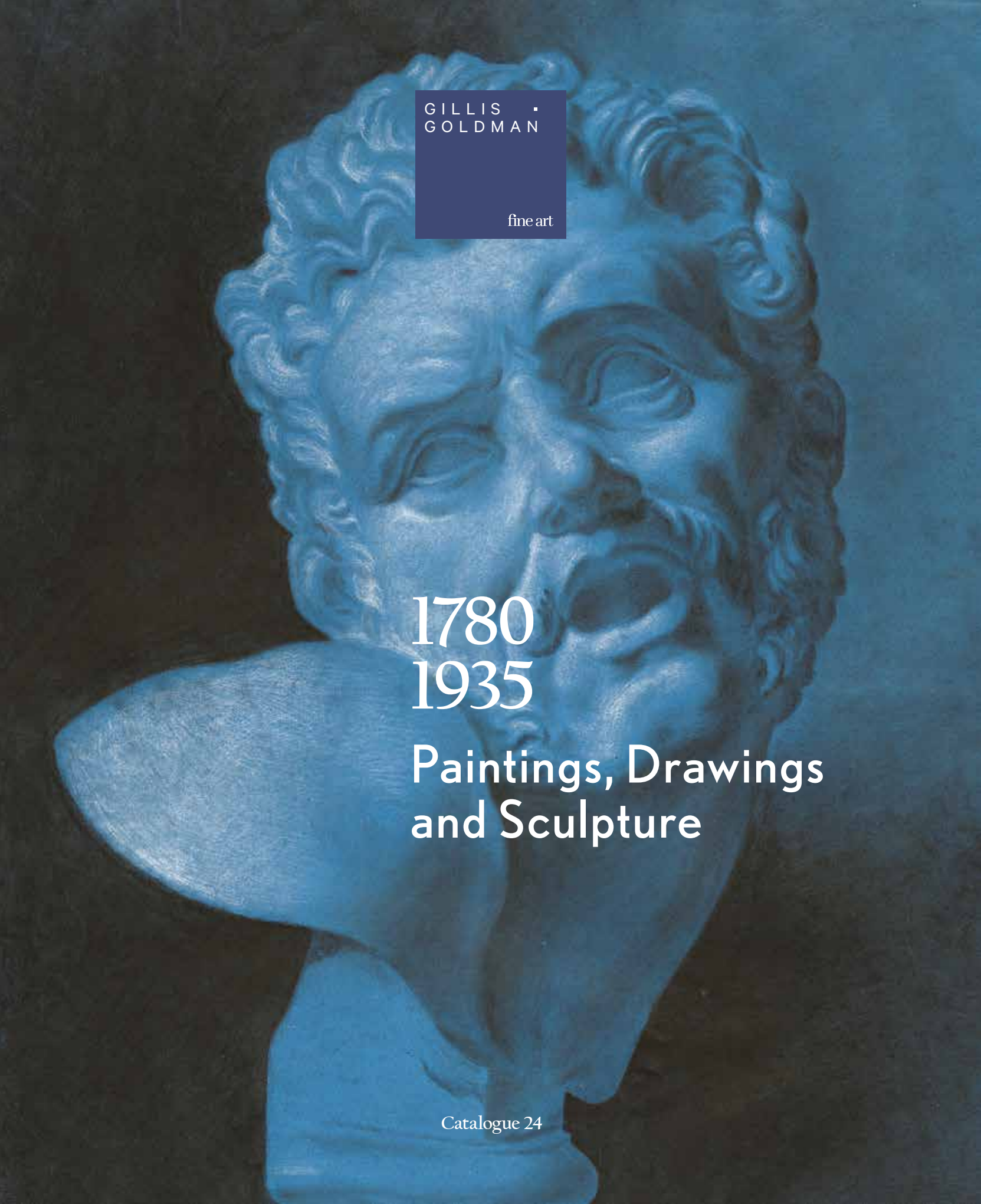




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fine art

1780
1935

Paintings, Drawings
and Sculpture

Catalogue 24



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GILLIS GOLDMAN FINE ART

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Dear Friends, Curators and Colleagues,

Most years, springtime finds us focused on our participation at TEFAF, an annual fair during which we have the pleasure of meeting with you in person and sharing our latest selection of works. For us, it's a delightful time to know more about you – and more for you – while also offering a deeper and broader view of our taste and personality as dealers. This June, our catalogue is our way of opening the doors to our gallery and welcoming you back.

This catalogue can also be considered an open window into the spirit that inhabits our selection of works. Clearly visible in this collection our tireless pursuit for images that captivate us. Our line of business brings us to explore a myriad of directions and to view hundreds of pieces each week, but throughout it all is a unifying thread guiding our eye towards singular works of art. Our enthusiasm for the surprising and the remarkable, framed by our aim to encapsulate the artistic aesthetic of the 19th century, are always the cornerstones of our collections. If a piece speaks for itself, it is a truly magical moment when it starts dialoguing with other works from our inventory. This catalogue presents an ensemble reflecting the eclectic taste that runs through the veins of all passionate dealers.

Highlighting only a selection of works is always a difficult exercise, as each piece has its own qualities and charm. However, Victor Hugo's *Hermitage* is extraordinary. In drawing these ruins perched atop a ragged rock jutting out of the sea, while powerless and in exile, Hugo creates a quasi-self-portrait. As the wind chases the rain, a tiny beacon of hope appears on the horizon: a small boat approaches. Is it a promise or a dream? At the other end of the atmospheric spectrum is Ottin's *View of The Pont Neuf*, which instantly transports us to a sunny afternoon on the quais de Seine. There are three other important works that we must also call attention to, each one offering an enticing perspective of Belgian art. First is Herbo's freakish depiction of a Kermesse celebration on Belgium's 50th anniversary, giving us a sense of where Ensor also found his inspiration. Then there's the monumental village scene painted by Baes when he was only 23 years old – a masterpiece of realism. Heavy with the symbolism so characteristic of 19th century Belgian art, the piece had been lost for decades when we found it and brought it back to Belgium. And last but certainly not least, we are thrilled to present Léon Navez's portrait of Gustave Van Geluwe, head of a Belgian couture house and at the centre of the country's art scene in the early 20th century. In fact, he dedicated most of his life to a passion very close to our hearts: collecting art.

Enjoy!

Noémie Goldman & Eric Gillis

1 **Jean Claude Naigeon** 1753 – Dijon – 1832
Study after the head of Milo of Croton by Pierre Puget

Charcoal and white chalk on blue laid paper, ca. 1780-1810	
Sheet	590 × 440 mm
Literature	Nathalie Motte Masselinck and al., <i>Jean-Claude Naigeon, 1753-1832: Les Dessins d'un Artiste du Siècle des Lumières</i> , Paris, Galerie Motte Masselinck, 2012, no. 26 (ill.)
Provenance	Naigeon's studio; thence by descent

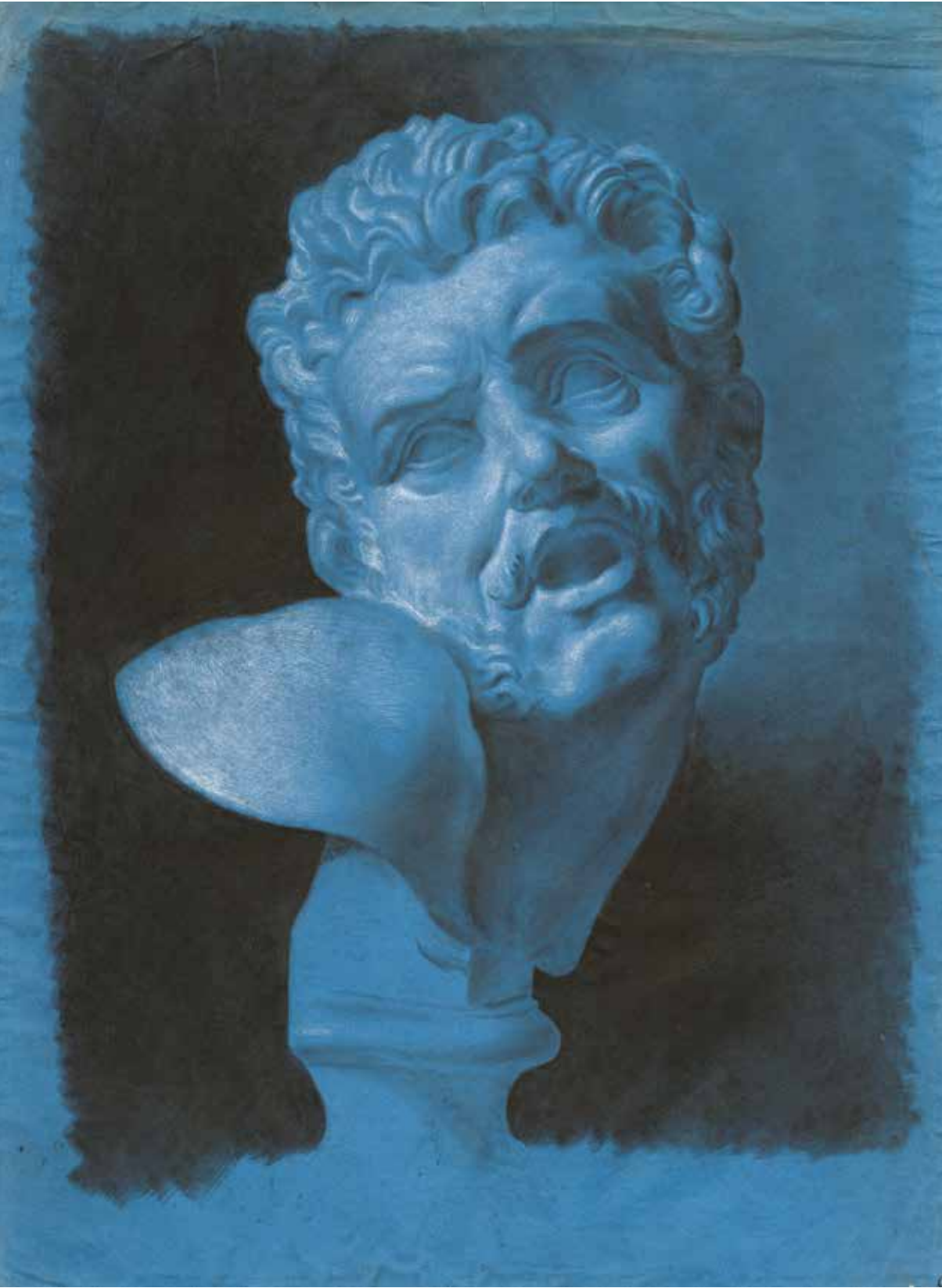
This powerful sheet illustrates Naigeon's unique approach, distinct from the academic classical style. As a young boy from a modest family, Naigeon's talent and enthusiastic persistence lead him to enter the free art school of Dijon, where he was trained in drawing and painting by François Devosge.¹ This period of teaching was paramount to the development of Naigeon's technical and stylistic virtuosity. Encouraged by Devosge, Naigeon learnt to draw by copying master drawings and drawing from *les bosses* – plaster casts made from antique and modern sculptures. This exercise of mimicking three-dimensional models on a flat surface was a traditional form of art training in the eighteenth century. Devosge encouraged his pupils to make such studies on coloured paper. He believed that the coloured paper would enhance the expression of volume due to the wider range of applied hues, by working towards light and dark simultaneously.²

This sheet is a fine example of such an illusionistic study on blue paper. The drawing illustrates the head of *Milo of Croton*, a plaster cast made after the head of a sculpture³ by the French 17th century sculptor Pierre Puget, showing the Olympic wrestler assailed on his back by a lion which inserts its claws deeply into his skin Caught in the most

intense moment of the classical drama, the face of Milo demonstrates the expression of excruciating pain to perfection. Intrigued by the physical and moral virtues of man, such classical themes would recur in Naigeon's oeuvre.⁴ The academic technique, instinctive style and expressive freedom make Naigeon a masterly neoclassical artist. Yet despite being winner of the Rome Prize of Bourgogne in 1780, his oeuvre is still not well known. Notwithstanding, this drawing is remarkable for its artistic quality and for its insight into Naigeon's vision.

The current sheet was part of a portfolio of 46 drawings which remained in the ownership of the artist's family until 2012, and it explains the remarkably pristine conservation of the sheet.

1. The two became lifelong friends and would frequently correspond about their journeys and artistic efforts (Masselinck and al., *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12).
2. Devosge himself seemed to prefer the blue tinted paper, which he used for his own studies. Naigeon would continue to use tinted paper for his studies throughout his career (Masselinck and al., *op. cit.*, p. 14).
3. The sculpture is at the Musée du Louvre, Paris.
4. Masselinck and al., *op. cit.*, p. 22.



2 **Alphonse-Henri Périn** 1798 Reims – Paris 1874

The Tomb of Cecilia Metella on the Via Appia

Oil on canvas, ca. 1824-1827
Signed lower left *A. Périn*
Canvas 22 × 30,5 cm
Provenance Possibly Georges Alphonse Jacob-Desmalter (1799-1870), Paris; his daughter Hélène Hortense Françoise Jacob-Desmalter, married with Henri Stanislas Rouart, Paris; his son Ernest Rouart, Paris; Joseph Berger, Paris; thence by descent

Born in Reims in 1798, Alphonse Périn studied in Paris in the atelier of Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, where he met in 1817 his life-long best companion, the painter Victor Orsel. During this period, Périn dedicated himself to the genre of historical landscapes, notably close to the master Jean-Victor Bertin, himself a former pupil of Pierre-Henri Valenciennes. In 1822, Guérin was appointed at the Villa Médicis in Rome, and the two friends, Périn and Orsel, followed their master and stayed in Italy for eight years.

The tomb of Cecilia Metella is the most preserved of the mausoleums that stand along the Via Appia in Rome. Built at the end of the first century BC, the circular monument has a diameter of nearly thirty meters, with a height that culminates at eleven meters. Richly decorated with friezes, it carries an epitaph that refers to Cecilia Metella. Historians are not sure about the identity of this wealthy Roman woman and attribute this burial to two different ones: the first, daughter of Pontifus Maximus Lucius Caecilius Metellus and wife of the famous consul Sylla, died in 81 B.C., while the second, who died around 20 B.C., was the wife of a triumvir at the time of Julius Caesar,

the wealthy Publius Crassus. Many artists visiting Rome stopped around, drawing or painting the tomb, without worrying about the identity of its host, as for instance Hubert Robert in the 18th c., and Jean-Baptiste Corot in the late 1820s. Alphonse Périn, faithful to the teachings of Bertin, chose to set the monument in the center of a landscape seen from the other side of the Via Appia. Settled in the shade and on a strip of grass, the painter patiently gave all details of the vegetation and captured brilliantly the plays of the light on the ochre architecture. He animated the scene with a family that stopped near the tomb. The man sitting at the foot of a tree talks to a woman holding a child by the hand, while a second girl has already moved away.

On their return to Paris, Alphonse Périn gradually gave up the landscape genre to fully dedicate his works to subjects of Christian inspiration. He and Victor Orsel together received orders for the decoration of the Church of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, recently built in the *Nouvelle Athènes*’ district. It is his masterpiece. Amazingly only few works by Périn of the Rome period remain in private hands, and they are very appraised.



3 Alexandre Bida 1823 Toulouse – Bühl (Alsace, then Germany) 1895

The Persan Barber

Graphite on scraperboard, white chalk ground on cardboard, ca. 1849

Signed lower right *Bida*

Sheet 460 × 370 mm

Literature Patrick Shaw Cable, *French Master Drawings from the Collection of Muriel Butkin*, Hudson Hills Press, N.Y., 2002, p. 78 (ill.)

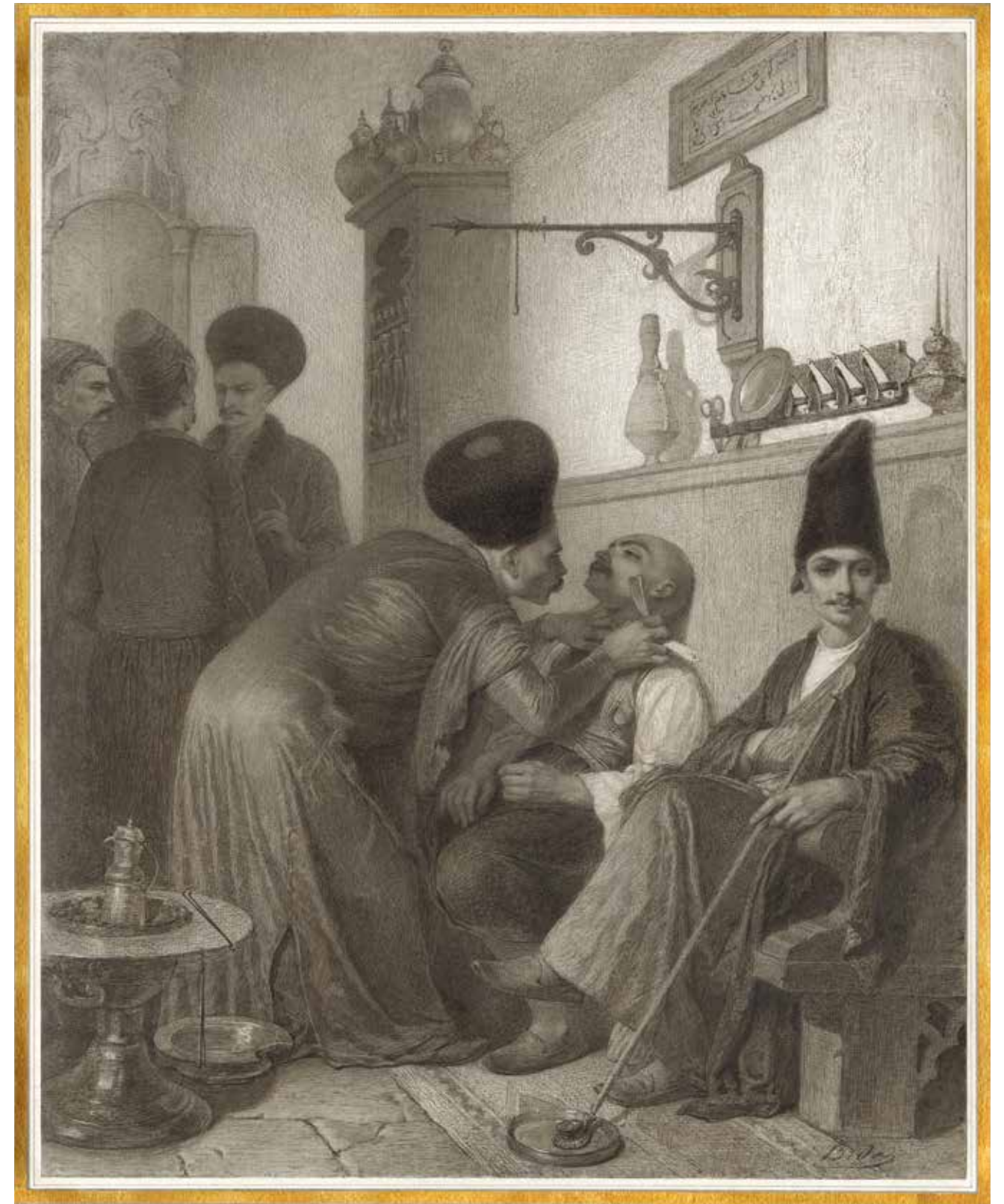
Provenance Artist studio; Vincent Price, Los Angeles and Paris; Private collection, France

A very impressive graphite on scraperboard, by Alexandre Bida who imposed himself as a major orientalist draftsman in the middle of the 19th century. When his French contemporaries opted for rich colours to represent an exotic Orient, full of sensuality and eroticism, he embraced a severe style through a technique only allowing black and white chiaroscuro. By scratching the black layer of graphite applied on some areas of the support, the artist creates a multitude of fine hatchings revealing the white ground as seen here in *The Persan Barber*. His goal was to achieve the same subtle light as in Rembrandt etchings, giving solid tones to chosen elements.

The scene depicts a picturesque Barber shop where a party of men sit for coffee and discuss everyday issues next to a barber who bears a massive headdress and is concentrated on his duty. During his tour to Greece, Turkey and Syria in 1843, Bida documented the places he visited and made portrayals of the peoples he met with all their specificities. The accessories – a round table, coffee pots, the chibouk pipe – are similar to those seen in his *Café in Constantinople*, a drawing from Muriel Butkin's bequest at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

The same composition has been used to illustrate an article in the Parisian journal *L'Illustration* (Sept. 1849) of as well as a popular travel guidebook by Adolphe Laurent Joanne entitled *Voyage en Orient* (1850). In both editions, the illustrations were made by a contemporary engraver and, the barber is said to be *Armenian* instead of *Persian*. Under Ottoman rules cohabited several ethnic minorities which attracted the interest of the orientalist painters, photographers and writers. After careful comparison, one notices the absence of some characters and the presence of new other details which were added regardless of the original composition of Bida.

Another *Armenian Barber* drawing featuring a barber and his client with limited decor, belongs to Malmaison chateau. It is part of a group of Bida's drawings gathered by the collector of art and famous benefactor Daniel Iffla alias Osiris (1825-1907). The latter built up an eclectic collection opened to orientalists as well as Chinese and European decorative arts. A passionate of Napoleon 1st whom he praised for his Egyptomania, he later offered both his property of Malmaison and his collections to the French state.



4 **Didier Petit de Meurville** 1793 Fonds-des-Nègres – Biarritz 1873

Animated view of the fortress of Alicante

Oil on paper laid on canvas, ca. 1850
Size 30,5 × 23,3 cm
Provenance Private collection, France

Didier Petit de Meurville – painter, art *aficionado* and prominent collector of antiques and religious art – had many talents, which he seemed to exercise simultaneously and successfully. Born in Haiti in 1793, when the political climate was tumultuous, Petit de Meurville ventured to Lyon and began his career as a silk manufacturer. Soon, the silk ornaments produced by *Didier Petit & Compagnie* were acclaimed for their richness by the press and public nationwide. Whilst laying with Pauline Jaricot the foundation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1822, Petit de Meurville established a network of influential politicians such as Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), minister of Foreign Affairs. In 1848 Lamartine nominated Petit de Meurville to become vice-consul of France in Alicante, later he was transferred to San Sebastian in 1857.

Exercising his consular duties in Alicante and San Sebastian, both picturesque landscapes provided Petit de Meurville with favourable painting opportunities. Traveling through the Alicante province, he painted numerous views of the sea and countryside, with specific

attention to its skies. His fascination with the local architecture and regional flora, and his panoramic studies have resulted in delightful paintings such as the present oil on paper *Animated view of the fortress of Alicante*.

This work offers a beautiful vision of the topographical character of Alicante with its rural and mountainous surroundings. Considering the relatively small format of his work and his modest pictorial approach, Petit de Meurville's oeuvre illustrates a high degree of plasticity – revealing at times the bright and direct brushstroke of impressionism – and a remarkable documentary quality. That way, Petit de Meurville brilliantly takes his full path into the *plein-air* sketch trend.

Whilst a significant part of his work is now preserved at the Zumalakarregi Museum, Gipuzcoa, the Musée Basque in Bayonne has dedicated an exhibition and catalogue to his work in 1994, followed by San Sebastian's naval museum in 2002, which showed coastal-themed gouaches and drawings from the collection of Javier Satrustegui.



5 Victor Marie Hugo 1802 Besançon – Paris 1885

The Hermitage, in Jersey

Pen, brown ink on laid paper, 1855	
Tilted <i>L'Hermitage (Jersey)</i> , signed and dated on the lower right <i>Victor Hugo 1855</i>	
Dedicated lower right <i>à mon vaillant compagnon de lutte et d'exil, à mon collègue, à mon frère d'épreuve, à celui qui a guéri ma fille, à mon ami le docteur terrier / Victor Hugo / Guernesay 1er janvier 1847</i>	
Image	190 × 220 mm
Literature	Pierre Georgel, <i>Dessins de Victor Hugo</i> , Paris, 1971, no. 66, pp. 124-125; Pierre Georgel, <i>Cet immense rêve de l'océan: paysages de mer et autres sujets marins par Victor Hugo</i> , Paris, 2005, p. 72, no. 59
Provenance	Private collection, Paris

The present sheet is among the best and the most stunning sheets by Victor Hugo still in private hands. The creator of *Notre-Dame de Paris* and *Les Misérables*, was not only one of the most important French writers and poets of the 19th century, but also a gifted draughtsman who left almost 4000 drawings. Most of them however were kept by him and then donated after his death to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and to the Maison Victor Hugo, both in Paris. During his life, he never sold them but gave some to friends, artists, mistresses, etc, like the current one very nicely dedicated to Doctor Barthélemy Terrier (1805-1876), who was exiled at the same time as Hugo, and was very close to the family in Jersey and Guernsey.

The present *Hermitage* was made during his stay on Jersey after his exile from France in 1850, and it depicts the hermitage on an islet off the coast. A little sketch, in a private collection, and two other small drawings in the collection of the Maison Victor Hugo are known representing the same scene. (See Georgel, 2005, pp. 72-73). In Hugo's time, the Hermitage was still separated from the rest of Jersey by the sea. According to local lore, it had been the dwelling of the 6th century hermit Saint Helier or Helibertus, who healed the locals and met his end at the hands of pirates. The story would have certainly appealed to Hugo, as would the romantic view of the ruined

building on top of a hill. The theme of the old, haunting building on a hill top recurs throughout Hugo's drawings.

Here, the *Rembranesque* treatment of the sky is striking. As in the famous Rembrandt print, the *Three Trees*, a stormy and dark sky full of rain is blown away to the left by strong winds from the right. The relation is obvious and very attractive. The Hermitage is shown by moonlight, with the staircase leading up to the hermit's retreat. While at Jersey, the Hugo family took a keen interest in photography, setting up their own studio and using the new medium to capture the landscape and the artist in exile. Hugo used these photographs as inspiration for his drawings, and probably did so for this work. Hugo's drawing feels very modern. This is the effect of his unique *modus operandi* : using the pen he also wrote with and mixing different techniques to draw.

A few years after the present sheet, writing to the poet Charles Baudelaire in 1860, Hugo himself states about his drawings: "I have ended up mixing in crayon, charcoal, sepia, coal, soot, and all sorts of bizarre mixtures that manage to render approximately what I see with my eyes and most of all in my mind. This amuses me between two verses" (quoted in Pierre Georgel, *Drawings by Victor Hugo. Catalogue*, London, 1974, p. 8).



6 **Léon Bonnat** 1833 Bayonne – Mont-Saint-Éloi 1922

Apotheosis of a Saint

Oil on canvas, ca. 1868
Signed lower right, with the initials *Ln B*
Canvas 32 × 51 cm
Provenance Auction Maître Loudmer, Paris, 16 October 1994, lot 69; Paul Lombard, Paris (acquired at the previous sale)

Though Bonnat is now mostly known for the numerous portraits he created of his contemporaries, but the painter did paint also religious works throughout his career. Some were official commissions, notably the mural of *Le martyre de Saint Denis* for the Panthéon in Paris (1880), while others such as *Le Christ en croix* of 1874 (Petit Palais, Paris) and *Job* in (Musée d'Orsay, Paris) were made to be exhibited at the *Salon*. Bonnat sought new ways to represent these themes. Here, the effect of the lighting is such that the saint is not so much carried upwards than forwards, into the space of the viewer. In a way Bonnat exhibited his extensive knowledge of 17th century painters such as Velázquez and Ribera in the vigorous brushwork, dramatic lighting and monochromatic palette. The landscape may be one that Bonnat saw himself on his journey to the Middle East in 1868.

Contemporaries would have called this work “realist” for the traits mentioned above, as well as for the thick application of paint and broad modelling of the figures. In this, Bonnat shows an affinity to the work of Gustave Courbet, his rival for the *Salon*’s medals. Unlike Courbet, however, Bonnat was a devout Catholic who believed religious paintings served a didactic purpose. See about this point the survey by Siulolovao Challons-Lipton, *The Scandinavian pupils of the atelier Bonnat 1867-1894*,

New York, 2001, pp. 14; pp. 25-28. A second version of the present work, but a gouache on paper and of smaller size, is kept in the collection of the Musée Bonnat-Helleu in Bayonne.

For a biographical outline, Léon-Josephe-Florentin Bonnat was born in Bayonne in 1833, and early in his life, he was introduced to painting by his uncle, the landscape painter Charles Sarvy. Bonnat received extensive training, much of which was dedicated to copying old masters. When the family moved to Madrid in 1847, Bonnat was able to study the 17th century Spanish painters in detail, which proved to be a lifelong inspiration. The painter was later much praised for his extensive and practical knowledge of historical painting, which he blended into his own style. Bonnat was also most renowned for his vivid portraits of contemporaries, including those of Victor Hugo, Adolphe Thiers and Léon Gambetta. The hefty price he charged for these works allowed him to build an important art collection, notably of drawings, which can be seen nowadays at the Musée Bonnat-Helleu, in his native city of Bayonne.

The work will be included in the second volume of the catalogue raisonné in preparation by Guy Saigne.



7 **Giuseppe De Nittis** 1846 Barletta – Saint-Germain-en-Laye 1884

Marina napoletana all'alba

Oil on panel, ca. 1870	
Signed lower left <i>De Nittis</i>	
Panel	9 × 18 cm
Literature	Enrico Picensi, <i>De Nittis</i> , Milan, 1955, p. 172; Enrico Picensi, Mary Pittalunga, <i>De Nittis</i> , Milan, 1963, no. 231 (ill.); Enrico Picensi, <i>De Nittis, catalogo generale dell'opera</i> , vol. 2, Milan, 1990, no. 179 (ill.); Piero Dini & Giuseppe Luigi Marini, <i>De Nittis. La vita, i documenti, le opere dipinte</i> , Turin, 1990, p. 383, no. 212 (ill.)
Provenance	Atelier de Nittis (Lugt 3683); Angelo Sommaruga, Paris (his stamp on the back); M. Innocenti, Milan (see Dini & Marini)

A splendid landscape by Giuseppe De Nittis illustrating his talent to capture the Italian luminous and golden atmosphere. Alongside Giovanni Boldini, De Nittis is today recognized as one of the most famous Italian painters of the 19th century. After having been expelled from the *Accademia di Belli Arti di Napoli* for indiscipline in 1864, he became one of the founder of the *Scuola di Resina*, a group of young artists interested in a new representation of Nature. In 1867, De Nittis settled in Paris where he studied under Jean-Léon Gérôme at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*. He exhibited at the Salons from 1869 to the 1880's and contributed to the Parisian art scene, next to Degas, Manet, Caillebotte, and many others. Though based in Paris, the artist never ceased to visit Southern Italy, where this elegant landscape was painted.

Very typical of the artist's technique, the construction of the present composition consists of four horizontal stripes in a grey-pink palette: the sky, the other bank of the Bay, the water, and the vegetal foreground. To reflect the warmth of the Italian environment, the artist used the brown color of the wood visible under the coat of paint. Interested in the luminous effects on Nature, De Nittis liked to paint the same views at different hours of the

day, e.g. as here at dawn, similarly to Hokusai's Mount Fuji Views or Claude Monet's Rouen Cathedral series. His focus to capture the lights bring the artist close to a certain abstraction and simplicity, characteristic of his works. The elongated format that allows to appreciate nature in a dilated and airy vision recalls the *Macchiaoli* movement, which influenced De Nittis in his youth. If he excelled in rendering the misty Paris at the *Belle Epoque* or the foggy London, De Nittis's talent undoubtedly has reached its peak when he painted the captivating light of his native country. The provenance of this landscape is prestigious: it belonged to Angelo Sommaruga (1857-1941), famous Italian editor and art dealer. In his private collection, he owned several works by De Nittis depicting the Bay of Naples.

De Nittis who died unexpectedly at 38 years old, is regarded today as a leading figure of the Italian Impressionism, although his career is much more complex as he also carved his way into naturalism and realism. The Petit Palais in Paris dedicated an exhibition to the artist in 2010, named *La Modernité élégante*, the first retrospective in France since 1886.



8 **Jan Hermann Coster** 1846 Almelo – Apeldoorn 1920

Raven

Oil on canvas laid down on concrete, 1875
Signed and dated lower right *J. H. Coster April. 75*
Size 43 × 30 cm
Provenance Private collection, the Netherlands

Jan Herman Coster is 29 years old when he painted this striking composition, in 1875. It is quite early in his career. He follows the tradition of still-life focused on dead birds attached to a red cord, hanging on a nail planted in a wall, like hunting trophies, such as Albrecht Dürer's *Wild Duck* (Museu Calouste Gubelkian, Lisbon), or Lucas Cranach the Elder's *Dead Partridges* (Kupferstich-Kabinett, Dresden). These compositions focus on the study of nature and the close descriptions of the bird's features. The nudity of the background magnifies the anatomic details of the animals, and their materiality. The attention given to the plumage, and the blue tones, can also evoke Dürer's *Dead Blue Roller* (Albertina, Vienna). Here, in the context of the 19th century art, the tradition seems renewed through Coster's simplicity. The choice of the raven is also very interesting. If the raven can be part of hunting practices, the figure also appears as an important animal in 19th century imaginary, crystallized by Edgar Allan Poe's poem, *The Raven*, published in 1845.

The dead crow is hung upside down on a white wall. The bird's left foot is attached by a red knot while the

right one is left hanging in the air. The body of the bird is sprawled on the wall with his wings displayed. A touch of red marks the interior of the open beak reminding the color of the knot and giving an interesting touch to the composition. Coster focused on the representation of the various types of feathers composing the plumage of the raven, using different touches and tones of black, blue and green. The dark figure stands out from the clear colors of the background, with a small and simple grey shadow on the left side.

Jan Herman Coster spent his life in the Netherlands, exhibiting his production in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and the Hague. At the time he painted this still-life, he had spent four years living in Amsterdam before moving back to his hometown, Almelo, until 1909. He painted mostly still-life and landscapes in the region of Twente, such as the *River Scene* (1881) kept in Museums Sheffield in the United Kingdom, or the *Sunset* in the Frans Hals Museum.



9 Benjamin Ulmann 1829 Blotzheim – Paris 1884

Lorelei

Watercolor on paper, ca. 1878-79
Sheet 250 × 170 mm
Exhibition Paris, Salon des artistes français, 1880, no. 5936; Mulhouse, Salon, 1883, no. 465
Provenance Atelier sale, Hotel Drouot, Paris, *Catalogue de tableaux, aquarelles et dessins par Feu Ulmann*, 16 May 1884, no. 13; Private collection, France

This beautiful watercolor by Benjamin Ulmann, still in pristine condition, is a smaller version of a large oil on canvas (154x89cm) that the artist had just made in 1878 and was bought by the French State at the Salon for the Musée Guéret. At this time, Benjamin Ulmann was an acclaimed and institutionalized painter: he had been awarded the *Prix de Rome* in 1859 and had received official commissions for the decoration of the Palais Royal and the Palais de Justice in Paris.

Due to the successful welcome of the oil, Ulmann probably made the present watercolor between 1878 and 1880, and he exhibited it at the Salon in Paris (1880) and Mulhouse (1883), a year before his death. It is focused on the nude figure of Lorelei, a legendary woman whose beauty and singing seduced and killed sailors passing by her rock along the Rhine. The name of Lorelei refers both to this imaginary figure and to a real rock on the right bank of the river, known of its dangerousness. The Ulmann's depiction was inspired by Heinrich Heine's poetic interpretation of the legend: *Die Lorelei*, published in 1824.

This Germanic legend actually came from the poet Clemens Brentano (1778-1842) but it is the work of Heine that made it famous. At the time, there was no preceding representation of it in France, and only a few in Germany, among them one by Ludwig Thiersch in 1860 (Aachen, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum) and one by Eduard Jakob von Steinle in 1864 (Munich, Schackgalerie). The two

canvas are very different from the present composition: Lorelei is sitting on a very high cliff, as a representation of the Greek poetess Sapho. Here Lorelei is represented seated on a small rock, while combing her golden hair with a golden comb, almost exactly as she is described by Heine. Behind her, a young knight on a yet sinking boat, very gallantly dressed, illustrates the powers of her voice, while their consequences are evoked through the two green hands of a victim described by Heine, gripping the rock, at the foreground of the composition.

At her feet, a blue snake encircles these decaying hands, while rising his head to his mistress. Absent from the legend, the snake appears as a symbolic presence, referring to the evil nature of this woman. Women and snakes, following the traditional iconography of Eve and Lilith, were a common association in the second half of 19th century, especially in the perspective of the *femme fatale*, a point carries to its peak by Franz von Stuck. The curse seems inherent to Lorelei herself, as the fruit of a fatality and not as a deliberated trap. It is possible that Ulmann was here inspired for the type of feminine beauty redheaded by the works of his friend Jean-Jacques Henner. The Ulmann's aesthetic bias to illustrate this story could also clearly be associated to Gustave Moreau's imaginary. Only after 1880 a few French artists exhibited representations following Heine's poem: Adelaide Salles-Wagner in 1886 and Georges Picard in 1893.



10 **Léon Herbo** 1850 Templeuve – Ixelles 1907

The Funfair in Brussels

Oil on canvas, 1880

Signed and dated *Leon Herbo 1880*

Canvas 59 × 80 cm

Provenance Private collection, Belgium

La Kermesse de Bruxelles is a splendid example of a typical 19th century travelling fair, funfair or also called *Kerkmis* in Flemish, from a very old tradition. Another interest of the present work is its date, 1880: the fifty years' anniversary of the young Belgium state; the flag of which clearly appears three times in the painting. In that sense, the Herbo's composition shows a new and happy society, under the monarchy of Leopold II. In August 16 of the same year, there were huge commemorations of that anniversary, and celebrations in a parc now called the Jubilee Parc, and it is possible that the present funfair took place at that place.

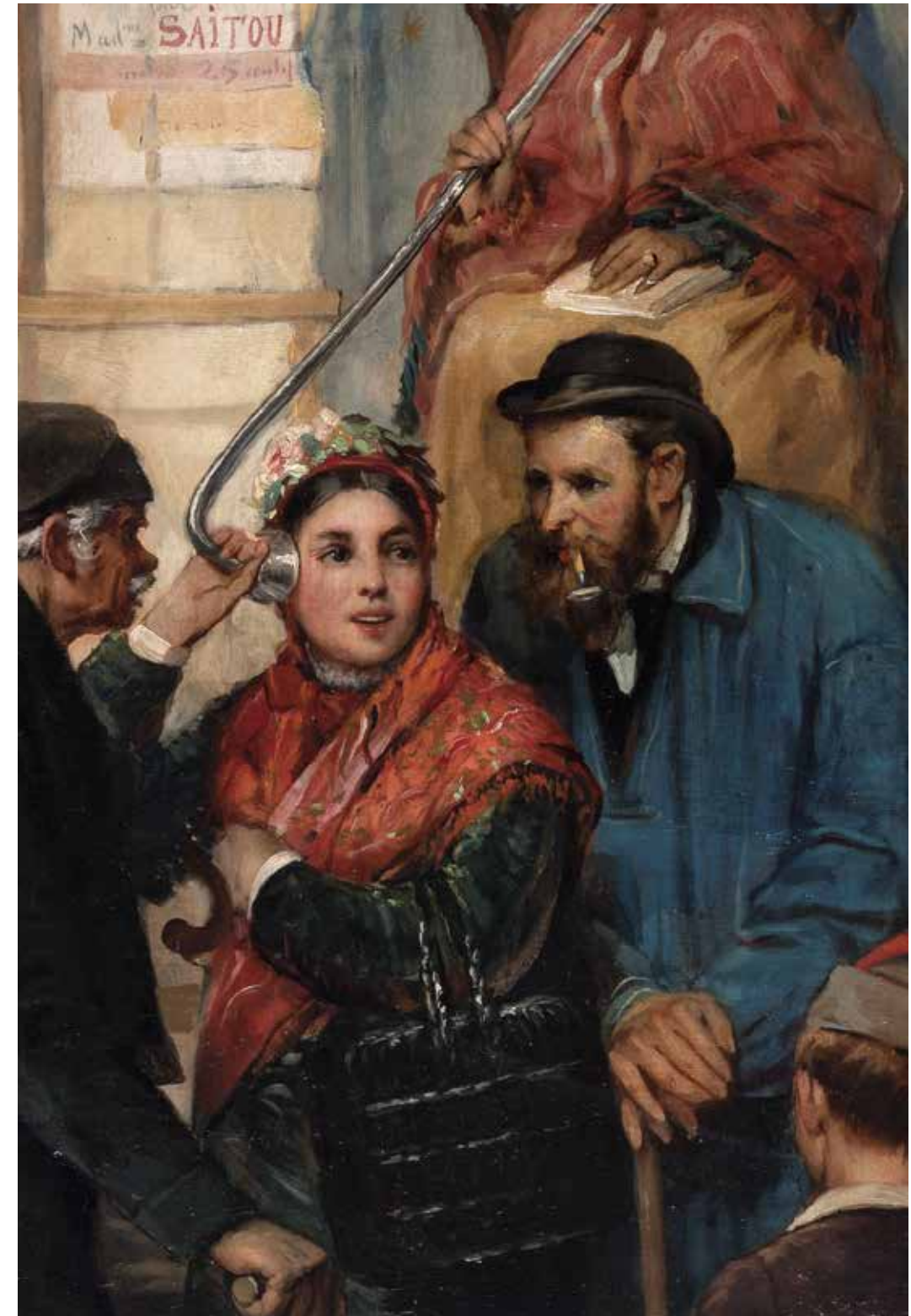
It is among the surprising facts of the History that Léon Herbo now appears as a forgotten painter, although at the time he was celebrated for his works at the Salon exhibition, he was collected and appraised for his artistic endeavours by his contemporaries and his works were highly praised in private and public collections. Whilst he focused on (orientalist) genre pieces, he also made flamboyant portraits of the Belgian and French elite. His reputation as a portrait painter secured a continuous influx of commissions for wealthy European interiors and produced a lavish painting style. In 1889, he received an Honourable Mention at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris and was made Knight of the Order of Leopold.

Furthermore, he played in 1876 a key role in founding the Brussels artist society *L'Esson*, together with Louis Cambier, Henri Permeke and Franz Seghers. Discontented

with the academic conservatism, the members of *L'Esson* turned to realist art, each finding his own style, and organised annual exhibitions in Brussels and abroad. Nowadays only a few works of that size by Léon Herbo are left in private hands, and rarely come to the market.

With *La Kermesse de Bruxelles*, Herbo created a work of art that not only portrays a wealthy patron, at the right side of the piece – who, perhaps, commissioned this work –, but also illustrates the Brussels funfair, thereby following the latest fashion of painting modern urban spectacles. The exotic and worldly curiosities attracted all classes of society, eager to experience a rush of folly. Alongside the café-concert and the circus, the travelling fair offered a new type of urban leisure in European metropolises and was a most popular forms of mass entertainment, combining high and low-brow spectacle. The attractions, like wax works, wrestling competitions, freak shows, theatre and wildlife menagerie simultaneously gave its spectators a sense of awe and shudder. Whilst Industrialisation gave rise to mechanical attractions, the side shows remained a favoured source of exotic wonder and urban escapism.

The appeal of the fair for 19th century artists needs little explanation. The colourful and exotic shows, as well as their far-ranging spectrum of onlookers presented the artist a theme enriched by dynamism and drama. Vibrant gestures and fabrics, a close-up of eavesdroppers, a fleeting momentum of voyeurism caught on canvas.



(detail)



11 **Auguste-Louis-Marie Ottin** 1811 Paris – Neuilly-sur-Seine 1890

View of the Pont Neuf

Oil on canvas, 1886

Signed and dated lower right *L Ottin 86*

Canvas 110 × 201 cm

Literature (about Ottin) Auguste Ottin, *Méthode Élémentaire du Dessin*, Paris, 1868, p. 5; Auguste Ottin, *Organisation des Arts du Dessin*, Paris, 1870

Certainly, this is the most impressive painting by Auguste-Louis-Marie Ottin and a rediscovery of a master. The artist is now more celebrated for his sculptures, which decorate cities and museums alike, than for his paintings and watercolour that are very hard to find. Born in Paris, the son of a copper and bronze turner, he started at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in 1825, aged fourteen, as a pupil of David d'Angers. Engaged in the romantic movement, the master encouraged the young artist to sculpt freed from the academic tradition, a way that would persist throughout Ottin's career, and put his sculpture oeuvre in the romantic fashion.

Ottin received various honours for his marble sculptures, among them the second *Grand Prix de Sculpture* of the *Prix de Rome* in 1836 for *Socrate buvant la ciguë*, a joint work with Bonnassieux. He stayed in Rome for five years, 1836-40, making a superb marble-portrait of Ingres (Villa Médicis). One graphic vestige of his sojourn is a *View of Rome*, 1837, kept at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Upon return he took part in the *Salon* exhibitions, until 1882. Ottin acquired state orders, strengthening his repute, whilst he unrestrictedly explored multifarious styles and disciplines: painting, drawing and art theory. Ottin also exhibited at the first exhibition of the Impressionism, in 1874 (no. 115-128). This is indeed not widely known, but Ottin played a key role in the *Société Anonyme des Artistes, Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs*, which was how the impressionists called themselves, acting as a founding member and treasurer.

Nevertheless, Ottin's graphic and painted works remain very scarce. The artist made them while venturing out

into the Parisian streets and suburbs to sketch or paint street views. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France keeps a very nice ensemble of eighteen of his watercolours, from the collections of the renowned Parisians, Jules-Adolphe Chauvet, Auguste Lesouëf and Hippolyte Destailleur, artist, writer and architect, respectively. They show Montmartre, Saint-Germain, Grevolles, the Tuileries, Rue de Richelieu, Ile Saint-Louis, etc. Clearly these works can then be seen within the origins of the avant-garde movement, not in a Romanticism vein at all, as clearly seen in the present work. The feeling of fixed and silence reality, unusual perspectives where horizontality and verticality are strongly emphasized by large walls or stairs on borders of the composition, as a frame of the image. It does link with Caillebotte works at the same time.

In his treatise about drawing, entitled *Méthode Élémentaire du Dessin* (1868), Ottin explains: “*Toutes les professions, toutes les classes de la société ont besoin du dessin. Non-seulement les artistes, les ingénieurs, les artisans s'en servent constamment, mais il n'est pas un individu dans le monde qui, à un moment donné [...] ne tente de recourir au dessin pour mieux se faire comprendre et mieux exprimer sa pensée*” (p. 5). In Ottin's opinion, drawing was necessary for every class of the society, above all for creating art. On the eve of the impressionist movement, with the objective of creating liberated arts, he wrote the essay *Organisation des Arts du Dessin* (1870), in which he called for getting rid of the static, regulatory aristocracy of the Imperial Academy, and for promoting the Arts in a less exclusive manner.



(detail)



12 **Peter Vilhelm Ilsted** 1861 Sakskøbing – Copenhagen 1933

A conversation in Troense

Oil on canvas, 1889
Signed and dated on lower right *Peter Ilsted 1889*
Canvas 43,5 × 60,5 cm
Provenance Auction, Charlottenborg, 7-8 December 1914, lot 91; Private collection, Denmark

This brilliant work depicts a beautiful relax sunny day in the village of Troense, on the island of Tåsinge, a very popular destination in Denmark at the end of the 19th century. The composition displays a man wearing a captain's hat is leaning against a wooden fence, hands in his pockets; next to him, another man is sitting on the fence, engaged in a conversation with a woman wearing a blue dress with a red scarf. They are enclosed in an idyllic setting made of a little white house, masts in the harbour, white sails on the see, shadows on the road, big green leafy trees, and a blue, almost cloudless sky.

Ilsted painted this view twice in 1889. This is the larger version. The vivid brushstroke and pleasant atmosphere in this painting are characteristic for Ilsteds' paintings of this early period in his career. Trained as an artist at the Royal Academy of Arts in Copenhagen, with his friend Vilhelm Hammershøi, Ilsted followed the Danish tradition in portraiture and landscape, paintings for which he gained considerable attention. In 1889, the year he painted

A conversation in Troense, Ilsted exhibited works at the Salon in Paris and received an honourable mention, followed by a medal the year after. One could relate the atmosphere to some of Caillebotte works, with views of riversides and sailing boats. The construction of plans, the foreground and the middle-distance, is very particular too. Plays of light, shadows and textural expression are keys features of his work.

Later, and from 1891, Ilsted started painting scenes of women in interiors, certainly under influence of his more progressive brother-in-law Hammershøi, and their close friend Carl Holsøe, all three are the most important figures in the art in Denmark at the end of the 19th century. His work was greatly appraised and regularly exhibited in Denmark and abroad during his lifetime, and works are now in museums such as the ARos Museum in Aarhus, Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, Rijksmuseum, Musée d'Orsay or The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



13 **Eugène Delaplanche and Emile Muller & Cie** 1836 – Paris – 1891

Eve before the fall

Enamelled stoneware, 1889

Signed on the right of the pedestal *E. Delaplanche*, and by the ceramist, *E. Muller*

Size 34 × 14 × 16 cm

Provenance Private collection, Paris

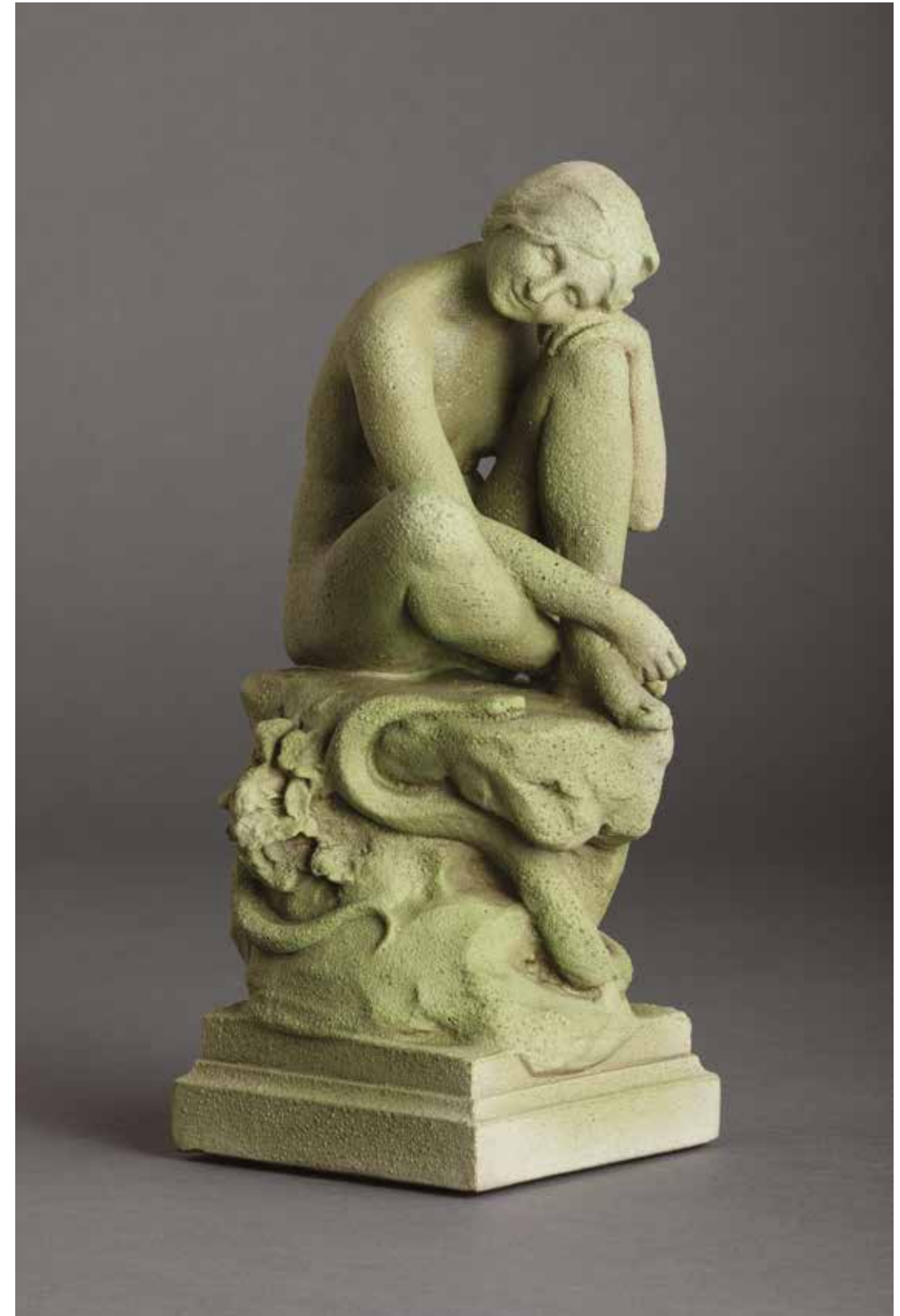
With *Eve before the fall* in 1889, Eugène Delaplanche cleverly made the link to a sculpture he had treated at the beginning of his career, *Eve after the fall* (1869). The success of the artist clearly came from his celebration of the female form, which brought to him the recognition in the *Salons*, and here he excels again. The plaster model of *Eve before the fall* was first exhibited at the *Salon* of 1890 (no. 3763), while the marble statue was exhibited posthumously in 1891 (no. 2442). These are now respectively in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Copenhagen), and the Musée d'Orsay (Paris), they both have extensive collections of his works. However, statuettes of *Eve before the fall* were serialized as early as 1889 in bronze by Barbedienne, or in grès [stoneware] by Emile Muller et Cie., and found their way to the bourgeois salons.

Founded in 1854, Emile Muller and later his son Louis were the first to produce figurines in grès in their own designs and those of contemporary masters such as Camille Claudel, Alexandre Charpentier, Jules Dalou, and many others. The works were exhibited at the *Salons* in their own right, and they were much admired for their exact rendering of the original. In 1896, for instance, noticing a group of his works reproduced by Muller

at the *Salon*, the sculptor Alexandre Falguière exclaimed over “It’s extraordinary, not one fissure, nor the smallest deformation. [...] And how much more beautiful it is than a bronze, more sincere, less sombre, and of such smoothness!”

The present *Eve* Delaplanche created here, by comparison to his early *Eve after the fall*, is natural and calm. She holds an apple in her hand as she listens to the snake, a contemplative expression in her eyes. This is Eve on the threshold of womanhood.

Eugène Delaplanche entered the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris in 1852. There, he studied sculpture at the atelier of Francisque-Joseph Duret, who closely guided his students. Delaplanche’s style evolved from the *picturesque*, inspired by his master, to the *Michelangesque*, a style he adopted after winning the *Prix de Rome* in 1864, to a more natural style towards the end of his life, but always inspired primarily by the female form. He also made monumental works for public buildings and churches, as for instance *L’Éducation maternelle* (1875), *Vierge au Lys* (1878) and *Musique* (1878).



14 **Charles-Victor Guilloux** 1866 Paris – Lormes 1946

Moon rising

Oil on cardboard, ca. 1891
Signed on the back *C Guilloux*
Size 220 × 328 mm
Provenance The artist's heirs; Private collection, Paris

A gem by Charles Guilloux that holds the seductive atmosphere of the artist's unique vision. Discovered by the critic Roger Marx in 1891, Guilloux achieved his recognition with a very personal artistic vision. As Seurat, he was passionate by the colour's theories developed by the chemist Michel-Ernest Chevreul. He also learned from neo-impressionist paintings, as well as from the Nabis and impressionist works at the Salon. From 1892, he exhibited at the *Salon des Indépendants*, as well as in the avant-garde gallery Le Barc de Boutteville, along with Paul Signac, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and the Nabis. While he possessed the chromatic knowledge of Seurat, and he understood Monet's research about the visual sensation of the atmosphere, he gathered these influences to create his very own aesthetic universe. Depicting landscapes around Paris and in Brittany, his research brought him to a radical evolution in 1892. He developed an extreme simplification of landscapes: a succession of

colored surfaces uninhabited, with a bright sky animated by fantastic clouds. At the *Salon des Indépendants* of 1892, his synthetized landscapes were celebrated by the critics, and eight of them were sold during the Salon.

Guilloux here unfolds yet another facet of his artistic universe. By representing a moon rising, the artist achieved the prowess to render this velvet luminous effects with a remarkable economy of means. The blue and gold sky occupies half the composition, focusing our attention on the astral sphere. From 1892, he limited his painting to a few types of patterns and reached a visual unity thanks to pure shades and expressive lines. This refined and poetic vision, almost Japanese, constituted a new way to interpret nature as well as, at the same time, maintaining its direct impression. Solely achieved with a selective palette of soft shades, this poetic landscape is much more than the work of a colourist.



15 **Attributed to Marie-Thérèse Duchâteau** 1870 Chaumont – Tours 1953

Young Amerindian Girl

Pastel on laid paper, 1892

Signed or annotated, and dated in ink on the back of the frame (cardboard) *Th=Duchateau 1892*

Sheet 274 × 356 mm

Provenance Private collection, France

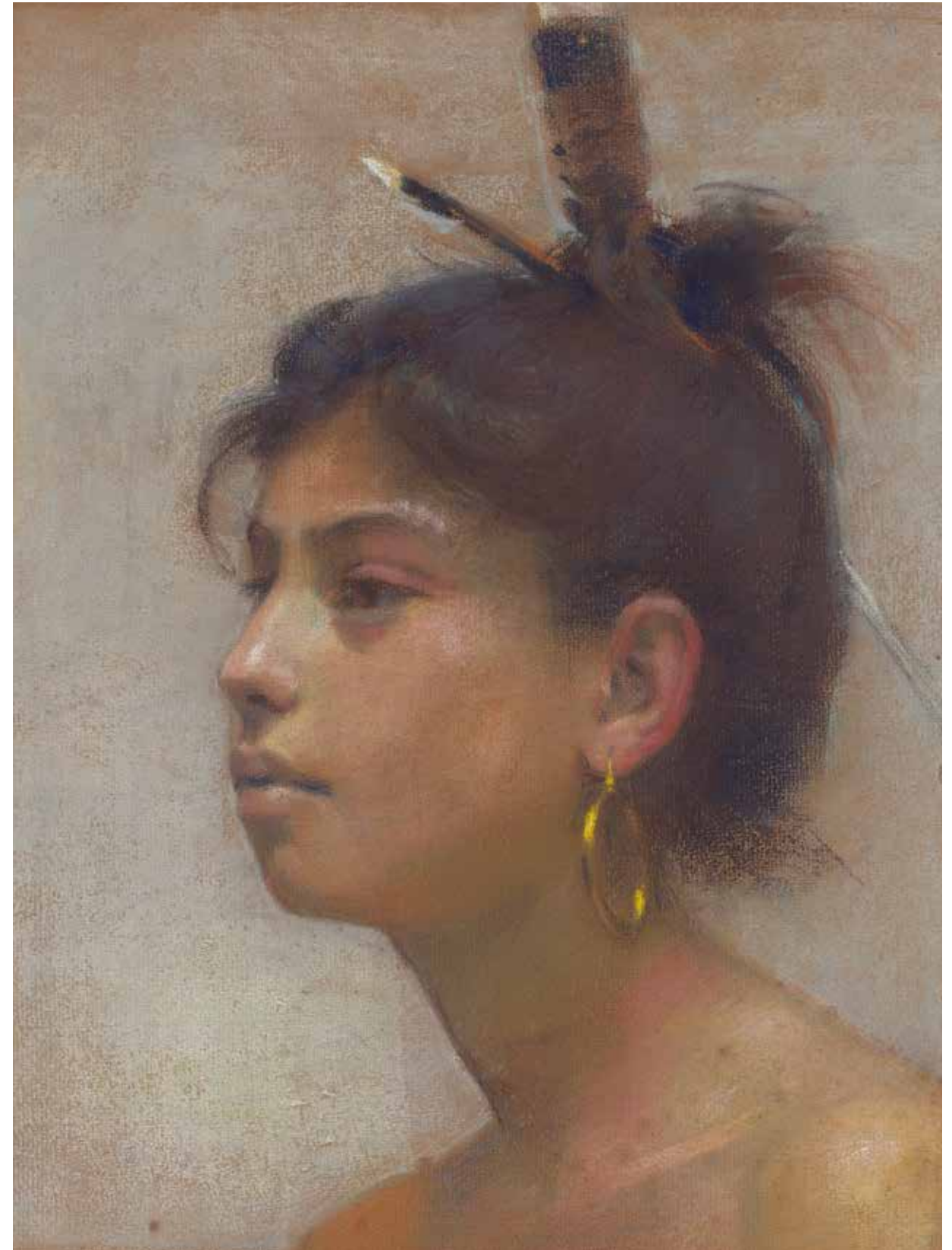
This beautiful pastel of a young Amerindian girl seems to have been made by Marie-Thérèse Duchateau in 1892, according to the inscription found on the support back. Born in the city of Tours, she studied at the Académie Jullian as Tony-Robert Fleury's and Flameng's pupil. She exhibited many women's portraits and pastels at the *Salon des Artistes Français* between 1891 and 1900. As she exhibited only under her family name, her works are often confused and wrongly associated to the name Theodore Duchâteau.

At the end of the 19th century, subjects inspired by the American imaginary were very appreciated, especially after the *Exposition Universelle* of 1889 in Paris. After two years of success in London, the spectacle *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* was presented in Paris for the international event. The show was very popular and attracted many artists such as Rosa Bonheur who made a famous portrait of William Frederick Cody, best known as Buffalo Bill, riding his horse (1889, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, Wyoming). Maximilien Luce and Edward Munch have also experienced the glamour of this spectacle.

Among the numerous actors and horse riders staged by Cody where many Indians. Accompanying the success of the event, a lot of publications and engravings representing the Indians and their way of life were produced at the same time and contributed to the fame of the subject.

The artist has drawn the face in a very delicate manner, focusing on the long neck and round shoulders of the model. Her features are underlined with different shades of white, green and pink, giving a great intensity to the work. Her hair is pulled back and adorned with feathers, revealing large golden earrings. Her attributes and a similar attitude can be found in a sculpture made by the French sculptor known as Duchoiseuil (or Duchoiselle), *Indienne sur sa pirogue et pêchant* (ca. 1860).¹ In this sculpture, the pose of the Indian woman has the same grace.

1. Annick Notter, Camille Faucourt, *Le Scalp et le Calumet. Imaginer et représenter l'Indien du XVI^e siècle à nos jours*, Musée du Nouveau-Monde et Musée des Beaux-arts de la Rochelle, 2017, cat. 97, ill. p. 109.



16 **Georges de Feure** 1868 – Paris – 1943

Houses by the water

Gouache and charcoal on paper, ca. 1895-1900
Signed on the lower right *de Feure*
Sheet 300 × 490 mm
Provenance Private collection, France

It is a beautiful landscape by Georges de Feure, and typical of his woks of landscapes, situated somewhere in Belgium or Holland, that de Feure made from 1895 onwards. This work might have been even exhibited in an exhibition of a large range of his landscapes in Brussels, in 1912, at the Salle Vos. The critic Ray Nyst observed about de Feure works in this exhibition: “Ses gouaches, paysages, sont, en réalité, de l’art décoratif de petit format”.¹ Inspired by his travels, these landscapes share the same color palette, the treatment of perspective, and visible boats in the foreground. The main element is often placed off-centre, in order to create a more dramatic perspective where the water and the sky meet. It is not certain whether this present composition is an existing landscape, or one dreamed up by de Feure. A second viewing reveals many new discoveries, such as the details on the houses, the lamppost hidden in the foreground and the fisherman heading to the water. What may well be the same landscape, but from another perspective, can be seen in a work called *Tour près de la mer* from 1898-1902, now in a private collection.

Best known for his posters in *Art Nouveau* style, de Feure was one of the most versatile and original artists working at the fin de siècle. He was an autodidact, moving with ease from painting to graphic art, theatre and industrial design. While the majority of his work consists of

affiches and decorative arts, de Feure also produced a body of paintings. Son of a Dutch architect, de Feure was born in Paris in 1868. He was first educated in the arts in Amsterdam, at the Rijksakademie. Dissatisfied with formal education, the artist moved to Paris to educate himself. He started out as an illustrator for the *Courrier Français*, *Le Figaro Illustré* and *Les Modes*. The affiches he designed at this time for the *Salon des Cent* and *Thermes Liégeois* and others, were influenced by the work of Jules Chéret. Moving from symbolism to the new style, de Feure became one of the most important designers working for Siegfried Bing’s gallery ‘Maison de l’Art Nouveau’. He designed furniture, glass, lamp shades and earthenware for the gallery. The much-noted gallery’s pavilion at the 1900 Paris World Fair was another one of his triumphs. Other artistic cooperation followed, notably with the Maison Krieger in 1908, for which he designed furniture, and after 1928, the Maison Madeleine Vionnet. But despite of his early artistic successes, de Feure died in poverty during WWII, in Nazi-occupied Paris.

The authenticity of this work was confirmed by Ian Millman in January 2020.

1. Ian Millman, *Georges de Feure : maître du symbolisme et de l’art nouveau*, Paris, 1992, p. 241



17 **Marc Mouclier** Aigre 1866 – 1948 Paris

The painter Désiré Fortoul at his easel

Oil on cardboard, ca. 1897
Signed MARC MOUCLIER, upper centre, numbered 41, lower left
Size 15 × 9,5 cm
Provenance Private collection, France

Marc Mouclier arrived in Paris around 1884 and started frequenting the *Ecole des Beaux-arts* and the Académie Julian where he met artists such as Ker-Xavier Roussel, Pierre Bonnard, Louis Valtat and Edouard Vuillard, who introduced him to the Nabis circle. In 1889, Mouclier exhibited for the first time at the *Salon des Champs-Élysées* a portrait of his father. The next year, his painting entitled *Gardien de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts* which depicted a man disfigured by a fall, was judged scandalous by the bourgeois visiting the Salon. After this event he preferred showing his artistic production at the *Salon des Indépendants*.

Along his practice of painting, he also started experimenting with engraving. In 1895, Emile Straus edited a text with illustrations of some of Mouclier's best works, celebrating the artist both as a painter and an engraver but mostly as an independant figure: «*Marc Mouclier est du groupe des patients insensibles aux sarcasmes, ceux qui tracent avec lenteur le sillon dans le Champ de la Vie, sans se renfermer dans l'étroitesse d'un cénacle, d'une école, sans s'étriquer d'un procédé, sans se bercer de la béatitude des œuvres aisées.*»¹ His practice of engravings and lithographs was triggered by his collaboration, as an illustrator, to the publication of the journals *La Critique* and *La Revue Blanche*. In the manuscript of his memories, Edouard Vuillard evokes his debt to Marc Mouclier, declaring that Pierre Bonnard, Xavier Roussel, Maurice Denis and himself had learn so much from him in the context of these journals.² Following

this experience of publishing, Mouclier started his own journal, *L'Omnibus de Corinthe*, in october 1896. It was a handwritten publication produced with "Papyrus" (Emile Straus), Willy, Georges Bans, Paul Redonnel, Oblief (Alcanter de Brahm), Alfred Jarry but also the artist Désiré Fortoul.

Fortoul started making illustrations for Mouclier's journal, for its second edition, in January 1897. It might be around the same time that Marc Mouclier decided to paint his portrait. Désiré is represented dressed in black and wearing a hat, working at his easel in an undetermined space. The soft tones used to depict the background could suggest the inside of a studio: a white square on the right side of the composition can suggest the light coming out of a window. The figure of the painter is brushed with large strokes of thick paint treated in impasto. The face of Fortoul is not detailed, only sketched with different touches of brown. This very rare representation is a testimony of Mouclier's circle and of his activities as a painter, an engraver and an editor.

1. Emile Strauss, *Marc Mouclier: peintre et lithographe*, Notes d'Art, Paris, 1895.
2. Quoted by Edmond and Charles Zieger-Viallet, "Voici cent ans naissait Marc Mouclier", *Sisteron-Journal*, 1^{er} juillet 1967.



18 **Firmin Baes** 1874 – Brussels – 1943
The Return of the Prodigal Son

Oil on canvas, 1897
Signed and dated lower right *Firmin Baes*. 1897.
Canvas 173 × 299 cm
Exhibition Brussels, Parc du Cinquantenaire, *Exposition Internationale*, 1897, no. 17
Literature Georgette Naegels-Delfosse, *Firmin Baes*, Brussels, Les Editeurs d'Art, 1987, p. 15
Provenance Private collection, USA; Private collection, Belgium

A rediscovered masterwork by Firmin Baes. The present piece was his very first monumental work achieved with the intention of providing to the artist a noteworthy entrance in the art world in Belgium. The artist was only 23 years old when he then presented this work, first at the *Exposition Internationale* of Brussels in 1897, and secondly, when competing the same year for the prestigious art prize in Flanders called the *Godecharle Prijs*. Since then, this master work remained unlocated until recently rediscovered in a private collection. No other such a large format is recorded in Baes oeuvre.

If Firmin Baes is rather unknown outside Belgium, he was appreciated as a foremost artist at the turn of the 19th century. Most notably, he studied under Léon Frédéric at the *Académie Royale des Beaux-Art* in Brussels between 1888 and 1894. The Frederic influence was prominent in Baes's early painting. While Baes was painting the present ambitious work, Frédéric even reassured his student, as one can read in a letter of August 1896: “Tu es en train, me dis-tu, à faire les deux femmes de ton enfant prodigue. Cela ne va pas, d’après toi: tu te trompes bien certainement. Si cela va comme les gamines, ce sera très bien ».¹ If Baes did not win the Godecharle Prize in 1897, the work was however praised in the leading Belgian journal, *L'Art Moderne*: “Le voici [Baes] qui débute enfin et son *Enfant prodigue*, œuvre de début, est une émouvante et vigoureuse création. Evidemment, on lui pourrait reprocher des malhabiletés, des dissonances de tons; mais le dessin est ferme et juste, la couleur suave autant qu’élégante. Et l’heureuse ordonnance de l’ensemble aussi bien que la pénétrante douceur de l’émotion nous font

connaître en cette toile la présence agréable d’un art véritable et humain”².

The Parable of the Prodigal Son, from the Gospel of Luke, relates the story of a son who left his family, ruined his heritage, and became a pig keeper to survive. Eventually, he understood how extravagant his life was and decided to return home. Baes chose to depict the arrival of the poor son, bare foot, starving and burdened with shame and remorse. No one in the village has welcomed him; he has not met his father yet and could not guess that he would be received by him with joy, affection, and forgiveness. The artist put the biblical scene in an Ardennes village, most likely Nafraiture, where Léon Frédéric invited him. The peasants’ girls on the left side seem the same ones who posed for Frédéric’s *Three Sisters* dated from 1896 (currently on loan at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Same blond curly hair, same red dresses, and a shared expression of sisterhood in this simple rural life.

While it was a most ambitious composition at the early stage of his career, the painting also demonstrates his delicate and compassionate vision, together with a clear appropriation of John Ruskin principles: depict religious allegory through contemporary rural scenes, the only places where the religious drama and vacuity of life can be properly felt.

1. Letter from Léon Frédéric to Firmin Baes, August 21st 1896, Brussels, AACB, inv. 83759.
2. “Les Oiseaux dans la cage”, in *L'Art Moderne*, May 2nd 1897, p. 138.



(detail)



19 **Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach** 1851 Hadamar – Capri 1913

The Storm, Capri

Oil on canvas, 1900
Signed, dated and inscribed on the lower right *KW Diefenbach Capri 1900*
Size 35,5 × 121 cm
Provenance Private collection, Italy

Painted at the turn of the twentieth century, this magnificent work shows a storm lashing the coast of Capri. Seagulls fly above the waves and, at the far left, a small sailing boat can only just be seen. This sole sign of human life is in stark contrast with the forces of Nature. This type of work made at Capri had no equivalent at the time. It is both powerful and symbolist. In rendering these contrasts, Diefenbach exhibits his talent as a great German painter. He used his painting almost exclusively to express his ideas of an idealistic and ‘natural’ way of living. He was much less interested in artistic recognition. While his early works were still populated by a few human figures, the landscape itself only carried symbolic meaning in his later paintings.

After the bankrupt of the Reformation commune he lived in, Diefenbach settled on Capri in 1899. Here, he stayed until his death in 1913 and produced over 200 paintings. Diefenbach was attracted by the island’s awe-inspiring nature and painted the coast many times, often in multiple versions of a same theme. Two smaller works similar to the present painting, entitled *Coast at night* (1900) and *Storm at sea* (ca. 1902-03) are kept in a prestigious private collection in Vienna (see Claudia Wagner, *Der Künstler Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach (1851-1913). Meister und Mission,*

Ph. D., Berlin, 2007, p. 53). The move to Capri also marked a new painting style, where Diefenbach experimented with the composition of his paints and materials (see Claudia Wagner, *op.cit.*, p. 197).

As the son of the painter Leonhard Diefenbach, Karl Diefenbach received his first training in the arts from his father. He later studied at the Munich Academy of Arts under Ludwig von Löfftz, Wilhelm Lindenschmidt and Alexander Strähuber. Diefenbach fell ill with typhoid fever in 1873-1874 and had to pause his studies for a long period of time. His illness proved to be a life changing experience, leaving him with a crippled right arm and a profound interest in the Reformation movement. Diefenbach became an adherent of the movement himself, living as a hermit from 1883 in a country commune called Himmelhof, near Vienna. His most famous work of these years is a large frieze *Per aspera ad astra*, composed of 34 paintings totalling 68 meters long. It represents a train of animals and naked children in silhouettes. After his untimely death, Diefenbach’s work was mostly forgotten. It wasn’t until the opening of the Museo Diefenbach at Capri in 1974 that his oeuvre was rediscovered and now appraised by many specialists.



(detail)



20 **Attributed to Emile Antoine Bourdelle** 1861 Montauban – Le Vesinet 1929

Le Baiser

Concrete, ca. 1905
Size 21,2 cm (height)
Provenance Private collection, France

This magnificent work most probably belongs to the first years of the 1900's – at the early stage of Emile-Antoine Bourdelle's career – and it should then be considered as part of the eight variations and copies of the similar composition on the theme of the kiss created by the artist. Surrounded by her hair melting into the short basis, the feminine face has her eyes closed as she is expecting her lips to be kissed by an invisible lover. Unlike the blurred eyes, her lips and nose are clear, they focus the attention, encouraging us to come closer and start a silent dialogue with her. The sensuality of the expression is an ecstatic movement not so far from the *Saint Therese* by Bernini, nor the story of Io and Zeus, the god taking the shape of a cloud to meet his human lover represented kissing the air.

Bourdelle took on different materials for the *Baiser* and, symptomatic of Art Nouveau aesthetics, he might have aimed at widely disseminating a work while varying its decorative resources. According to a note, he even planned to make versions with various coloured marbles in 1905-06, adding flowers and other decorative effects.¹ First, there are two compositions of the *Baiser* larger than the others, ca. 42cm height, still with the identical face and expression, but where we see shoulders and fragments of flowers: a marble, dated and exhibited in 1899 at Société nationale des Beaux-Arts (unknown whereabouts)², and with an effect of *non finito*, reminding Rodin's; and a bronze named *Baiser aux volubilis* (Musée Bourdelle,

br. 418) and dated 1900. It is no surprise that the owner of this marble was Maurice Fenaille who collected Rodin's as well³. In both works, in marble and bronze, there are flowers — convolvulus — around the upper bust of a woman. Slightly smaller, but still with shoulders and a flower, this time in a larger hairstyle, there is another bronze version recorded (Musée Bourdelle, br. 423). For the five other versions, ca. 21cm height, and including ours, Bourdelle removed these elements and kept her hair and face only. Since the decorative items have been removed, the subject may be interpreted into a broader spectrum. Through a more symbolist perspective, it is a fragmentary work, it lays on a base, similar to a soft pillow and the *Baiser* may also be seen as a dreaming figure asleep and following unconscious desires. It is as serene, though as mysterious as Odilon Redon's *Closed Eyes*, 1890 (Musée d'Orsay), representing the same ambiguity in painting.

In the same years, Bourdelle had a contract with the manufacturer of porcelain, Théodore Haviland, and during this collaboration around 1899-1907 he made *Le Baiser craquelé* (Musée Bourdelle, po. 4434), in a similar composition, and named after the technique of crazed porcelain⁴. It looks like a flower blossoming at the sunlight while the human face is deeming into the milky matter. This porcelain was then the original matrix for a third bronze version (Musée Bourdelle, br. 415 and 1416), as betrayed by the “Haviland” mark on the bronze. This process – the bronze after a porcelain



– is rare in Bourdelle’s work, and not documented. Furthermore, there are a second marble version, always the same composition, but dated 1907, and now at the Musée Ingres Bourdelle in Montauban (MI.99.3.1); and a plaster, always of the same size, now at the Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. Like many artists at the same time looking to present multiple versions of a work and in several mediums, Bourdelle also liked to experiment mediums or polychromy effects caused by the medium itself, or via the color of the patina. In 1900, he even exhibited at two sections of the Salon, sculpture and ceramic, probably to show softened boundaries between decorative arts and fine arts.

The present version then brings in this corpus a new medium, the concrete, which is quite unique for Bourdelle’s and not documented again. Bourdelle might have to try and experiment a new trend, and Elodie Voillot led in 2007 a brilliant dissertation⁵ about use of concrete among the young sculptors in Paris and in the early years of the 20th century. A new generation eager to detach itself from the cumbersome legacy of the 19th century. The first examples appeared in 1905 at the Salon, notably by the sculptor Giovanni Cipriani, and it did not stop growing until the start of the World War I in 1914. The main artists were among others, Alexander Archipenko, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Chana Orloff, Joseph Bernard, Seraphin Soudbinine, and Gaston Toussaint, and Bourdelle knew most of them. Elodie Voillot also shows how moulage in concrete was taught to this generation at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in the 1890s’. Motivations were numerous and complex. Both for experimentations between plaster and marble, both for economic reasons, both for its innumerable technical qualities, easy to mould and polish, concrete became a medium with legitimate status, a medium in its own right and not for making copies, as it was mainly through the 19th century. Concrete was a medium adapted to their aesthetics, all in curved lines, flat surfaces, clean volumes and in simplifying, but always with a narrative dimension. However, Elodie Voillot shows that concrete casts did not lead to mass production, that, on the contrary, it was reserved to confidential circles of friends or patrons.

Many points and clues lead to Bourdelle’s authorship, and it clearly seems to be an experimentation, again. As pointed out in 2011 by Florence Viguier-Dutheil, in her catalogue of Bourdelle’s sculptures⁶ kept at the Musée Ingres Bourdelle, there is however an obvious lack of information about Bourdelle’s process and experimentation regarding the present composition and the chronology of known versions. In the absence of documentation, we then carefully stand on an attribution to the artist, although we are personally convinced about his authorship. At present there is no evidence of the opposite.

As Véronique Gautherin⁷ pointed out, this work is at the same time clearly inspired by Bourdelle’s position in the Rodin studio, and taken by concerns of ornamental graces specific to the Art Nouveau. According to Colin Lemoine, Bourdelle was also interested in masks⁸. Our head also has a life on its own, as it may be seen also as a mask, like those made in wax and stoneware by Jean-Désiré Ringel d’Illzach for Maurice Rollinat (1892) and Hector Berlioz (1900). For instance, Bourdelle conceived in 1900 another composition, titled *Le Baiser-masque* (Musée Bourdelle, pl. 2492) in porcelain bisque and in collaboration with Théodore Haviland, again⁹.

1. Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, “Devenir Bourdelle”, in *Revue de l’Art*, 1994, no. 104, pp. 30-39, and pp. 35-36.

2. See photographs hold by the Musée Bourdelle, Paris (PV 1908); reproduced in Le Normand-Romain, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

3. Stéphanie Cantarutti, *Bourdelle*, Paris, Gallimard, 2013, p. 62.

4. Stéphanie Cantarutti, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

5. Elodie Voillot, *La Sculpture en ciment: des Expositions des Produits de l’Industrie aux Salons*, Diss., Paris, Ecole du Louvre, 2007, pp. 58-65.

6. Florence Viguier-Dutheil, *Emile-Antoine Bourdelle, Sculptures*, Musée Ingres, Montauban, 2011, p. 71.

7. Véronique Gautherin, *op.cit.*, 1994, p. 483.

8. Colin Lemoine, “Ce que nous avons tenu pour fantastique s’offre à nous comme réel: le masque chez Antoine Bourdelle”, in *Masques, de Carpeaux à Matisse*, Paris, Hazan, Musée d’Orsay, 2008, pp. 124-133.

9. Exh. Cat., *Masques, de Carpeaux à Matisse*, Paris, Hazan, Musée d’Orsay, 2008, no. 156 and p. 132.



21 **Jules Chéret** 1832 Paris – Nice 1932

A little Breton girl

Oil on panel, ca. 1906
Stamped lower left *J Chéret, Collection Meurlot Chollet*
Size 22 × 16 cm
Literature For another example of his Breton work, see: Bargiel & Le Men, *La Belle Époque de Jules Chéret: De l’affiche au décor*, Paris, 2010, p. 78
Provenance Eugénie Meurlot-Chollet, Paris

A ground-breaking figure in the history of advertising, Jules Chéret, dubbed ‘Watteau de la Rue’, was world famous for his flamboyant poster art, which decorated the Parisian streetscape during the second half of the 19th century. In contrast with his colourful, dancing nymphs that covered posters, spectacle announcements, book covers, and advertisements, this small painting demonstrates a modest virtuosity by the artist’s hand. After having been the recipient of great success and diverse commissions by patrons, such as Baron (Joseph) Vitta and Maurice Fenaille, Chéret gradually retired from managing the press as art director and dedicated his time to paintings, frescoes and decorative arts.

Charmed by the Atlantic coast, Chéret built his new home in L’Harcouet in Brittany in 1906, where he was his own architect, decorator and landscape artist. Away from the Parisian bustle, the peace of mind together with the nearby

rough but untouched nature produced realist, toned-down paintings of the Breton people and their natural surroundings, such as *Paysage de Bretagne* (priv. coll.), and, of course, this small and fine panel *Petite fille bretonne*. The use of an earthy colour palette, the swift brushstroke and the reduction of details render an atmosphere unseen in Chéret’s frivolous work. The girl, modest in demeanour and attire, was given the same attention and devotion as Chéret did for the Parisian ladies. Unusual in the artist’s oeuvre, *Petite fille bretonne* is a highly remarkable work of art of his Brittany period.

It is worth mentioning the distinguished provenance: Eugénie Meurlot-Chollet. She was a painter at the beginning of the 20th century, a close friend of Sarah Bernhardt, and famously known with the latter as the best ambassador of Lalique’s jewellery.



22 Paul Iribe 83 Angoulême – Menton 1935

The arrest

Chinese ink, watercolour and collage on paper, ca. 1930-35

Signed lower right *PAUL IRIBE*.

Size 370 × 340 mm

Literature Anne-Claude Lelieur et al., *Paul Iribe: Précurseur de l'Art Déco*, 1883-1935, Paris, 1983, pp. 12 & 49

Provenance Private collection, France

Paul Iribe, a graphic designer and satirical illustrator, has influenced both top-end fashion designers as well as the public's opinion in times of political disenchantment. Satire, simplicity and aesthetic design can best describe his oeuvre, which illustrates the fiascos of the French politics, the distress of WWI and the elegant flamboyance of the following *années folles*.

Inspired by contemporary political events, Iribe created powerful, and sometimes violent, images filled with dark surfaces of black ink on white paper, such as demonstrated in *L'Arrestation*. The simple details – Iribe's signature style – in the *gendarme's* uniform and the small figures show the forceful arrest of two high ranked men. Almost strangled to death, the man in the gendarmes gigantic hand attempts to protest, whilst the other is being dragged hastily, with great fear in his eyes. The originality of Iribe is his use of collage, especially for the press illustration field. Through this technique, he achieved to increase the strong contrast of his compositions and create image with powerful visual impact.

Attracted to art from an early age, Iribe was an autodidact who did not frequent any artist studio or decorative arts school. Instead, he took on a typography apprenticeship at the daily journal *Le Temps*, where he worked as an editor.¹ This practice gave Iribe the fundamentals

of journalism, thereby teaching him the aesthetic principles of composition, layout and conciseness in information. His satirical drawings would demonstrate this acquired mastery. His early cartoons, at the age of seventeen, already exhibited his taste for an original layout. Iribe provided regular collaborations with magazines such as *Journal de Paris*, *Le Sourire* and *L'assiette au Beurre*, quickly ranking him amongst the best humourists of his time, while maintaining a strong critical look at the French society.

Iribe would continue to create political and satirical cartoons throughout his life – he established his own journal *Le Témoin* between 1906 and 1910 –, but he also invested himself into decorative arts from 1908 onwards, creating mundane fashion illustrations for the renowned designer Paul Poiret², producing opulent decors for theatre plays and Hollywood movies, and designing lavish jewellery with his muse and lover Coco Chanel.

1. Anne-Claude Lelieur et al., *op.cit.*, p. 12.

2. In October 1908 a fashion album came out called *Les robes de Paul Poiret racontées par Paul Iribe*. The finely lined drawings filled in with the pochoir technique was so different to contemporary fashion catalogues, that Iribe's new style of illustrating fashion would inspire other draughtsmen like Lepape, Martin, Barbier and Marty. See Anne-Claude Lelieur et al., *op.cit.*, p. 49.



23 **Maurice Langaskens** 1884 Ghent – Schaerbeek 1946

The Knight or Saint George

Oil on canvas, laid down on cardboard, 1911
Signed and dated lower right *M. Langaskens 1911*
Size 80,5 × 70,5 cm
Literature Benoit Schoonbroodt, *Artistes belges de l'Art nouveau: 1890-1914*, Brussels, Racine, 2008, p. 61
Provenance Private collection, Belgium

The Knight is a noteworthy example of the Pre-Raphaelite influence on other artistic movements such as Symbolism and Art Nouveau, and on one of its representative artists in early 20th century Belgium. Both movements inherited the Pre-Raphaelite's favorite subjects – biblical and medieval themes, poetry and the woman's staging – as well as its plastic features – vivid colors, lack of depth, taste for detail, shape simplification.

The present representation of a powerful Saint George has its roots from the decorative idealism which characterizes Langaskens' beginnings. At that time, he was first trained at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris and then at the *Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts* in Brussels, with his becoming friend Constant Montald. Langaskens and Montald, both admirers of Pre-Raphaelites, had assiduously attended the *Salon de l'Art Idéaliste* created by Jean Delville between 1895 and 1898. Investing into this ideal, Langaskens depicted a Saint George more related to the symbol of sanctity than to the tradition of the martyr's iconography. Displayed as a Roman officer, his helmet crowned by a laurel wreath, the saint and his horse's heads are surrounded by a halo. St George occupies the whole of the pictorial surface by proudly standing on his white horse, with his huge blade dividing vertically the space of the composition

The symbolism is also expressed by the choice of colors which reveals the “Langaskens' art with an intense, deep and living vibration”¹. The background is dominated by two colors: yellow, symbolizing divine light, and blue, creating a contrast with its bleakness. According to Vassily Kandinsky, these two colors create the first major dynamic contrast in art. Yellow exhales spiritual warmth, whereas blue, when darkened, symbolizes inhuman sadness². Possibly Langaskens made a reference, through colors' symbolism, to the martyr inflicted to George during Christians' persecutions. *The Knight* therefore synthesizes an art predominantly inspired by the elders, the Pre-Raphaelites, but which is also anchored in its own days through the display of Art Nouveau decorative decors and the symbolic use of colors in line with modern pictorial-spiritual theories.

1. Benoit Schoonbroodt, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
2. Vassily Kandinsky, *Du spirituel dans l'art, et dans la peinture en particulier*, 1910, French edition and trad. Nicole Debrand & Bernadette du Crest, Paris, Denoël, pp. 142-151.



24 **Luc Olivier Merson** 1846 – Paris – 1920

Study of a Sleeping Child

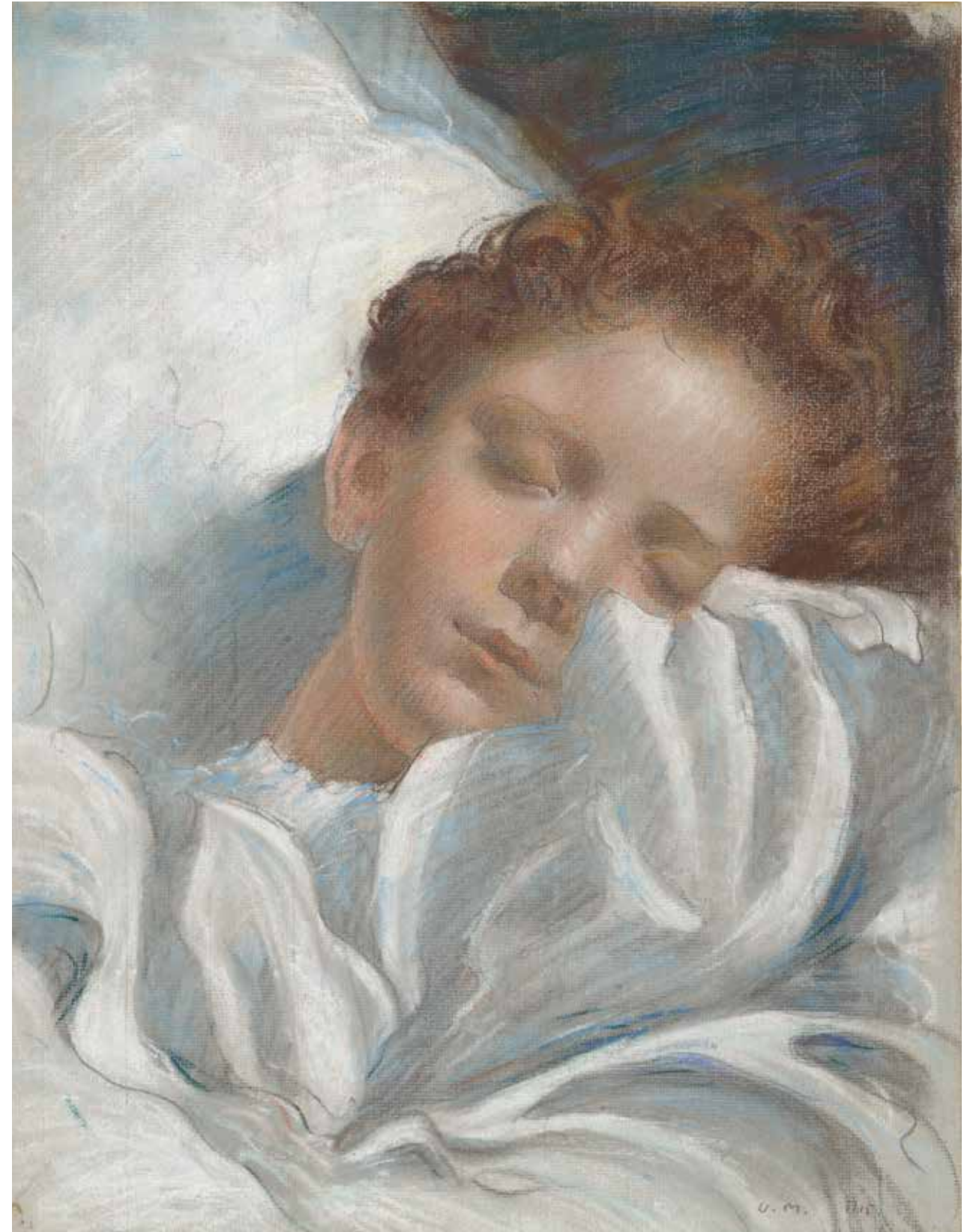
Pastel on blue-grey laid paper, 1915
Signed and dated lower right O.M. 1915
Sheet 381 × 295 mm

Early on in his artistic training, Merson developed a great taste for colour and mystical compositions. In this case, the subject of his drawing is far from mystical, however. The sheet is focused on the sleeping face of a young adolescent, surrounded by bounteous layers of draped fabric. Hiding part of his face, the folds of fresh white covers, treated with strokes of blue and orange, look like a jabot or ruffle. The innocence and tranquillity of the boy's expression is underlined by the softness of his red and brownish curls. A simple and powerful composition, entirely devoted to the portrayal of the sleep, this work recalls Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *Le Petit Paresseux* (Musée Fabre, Montpellier).

Merson explored the subject of sleep in other notable works, for example in his version of the *Repos pendant la fuite en Égypte* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), depicting the Virgin and Child sleeping in the desert, at the feet of an enormous sphinx. He reproduced this iconography many times over the years. In works such as these, sleep becomes the focus, adding a further dimension to the

religious subject of the painting. Children were often central figures within Merson's oeuvre, sometimes used as allegories within his compositions, for example as angels in the panels *La Vérité* and *La Fortune* from his compositions for the Hôtel Watel-Dehaynin (Musée d'Orsay, Paris).

By 1915, the year Luc Olivier Merson created this beautiful drawing, the French painter and illustrator was in the twilight of his academic career. His ascension had started in 1869, having won the Prix de Rome for his emotionally charged painting, *Soldat de Marathon* (École des beaux-arts, Paris). Following the customary stay in Italy, Merson returned to Paris, where he secured numerous official commissions for the burgeoning construction projects initiated by the Third Republic. Notable examples include the Palais de Justice (1877), the office of the Sorbonne university's rector (1886), the Hôtel de Ville (1889) and the Opéra-Comique (1897). Merson continued to work for private commissions and exhibited regularly at the Salon, particularly religious works inspired by the early Italian Renaissance.



25 **Rudolf Schweitzer-Cumpăna** 1886 Pitesti – Bucharest 1975

Peasant girl with headscarf

Charcoal on paper, ca. 1917-18

Signed, on the lower right, in black *Schweitzer-Cumpăna*

Sheet 280 × 260 mm

Provenance Private collection, Romania

Rudolf Schweitzer-Cumpăna was born in Pitesti (Romania) in 1886 into an ethnically German family. In 1904 he went to Berlin to attend the Royal Academy of Arts, studying under Erich Hancke, Arthur Kampf and Anton von Werner. At this time, he was influenced by German expressionism as well as impressionism and the Wiener Secession. As he later stated about his artistic education: “my strong knowledge of shapes, volumes and values was very useful, the drawing techniques I learned at the Academy remained a sort of backbone for my art.”

Upon his graduation in 1909, the artist returned to Romania to capture the country’s landscapes and inhabitants in his own, expressionist style, painting landscapes and portraits of peasant or gypsy girls. The poet and philosopher Nichifor Crainic wrote in 1919: “Mr. Schweitzer had a very Romanian rustic inspiration; one could even say that it was exclusively folkloric...” The Schweitzer-Cumpăna’s peasants portrayed are indeed shown working on their daily tasks, in a manner neither idyllic nor imbued with a strong social message. The present sheet is perfect example of this. The girl’s traits are caught in the black lines, her gaze subtly averted from the viewer. This drawing might well have been made as a study for a later oil portrait, *Girl* dated 1918 (Private collection). As a portrait, this sheet shows

more detail than the portraits the artist executed in oil, where the effects of colour and light take precedence over detail. These are frequent occurrences in the oeuvre of Schweitzer-Cumpăna. Other examples are *Peasant girl with headscarf* (ca. 1920, private collection) or *Peasant woman on bench* (1929, private collection).

This portrait may well have been made on one of the painter’s study trips into the countryside or to Bulgarian town of Balchik, on the Black Sea. Between the wars, this seaside resort with its oriental atmosphere was a popular destination for avant-garde Romanian painters. Here they would paint the coast, the traditional town houses and their exotic Tartar inhabitants. This informal group of post-impressionist painters – which also included Francisc Ţirato, Theodor Pallady and Stefan Popescu, among others – became known as the Balchik school and would prove central to the development of painting in 20th c. Romania.

Schweitzer-Cumpăna himself was a very influential proponent of Romanian painting during his lifetime and he was made professor at the Nicolae Grigorescu Institute of Fine Arts in Bucharest. His works are mainly kept at the National Museum of Art of Romania, and in private collections.



26 Hermann Wöhler 1897 – Hannover – 1961

Frühe Landschaft

Pen and black ink on paper, with an imaginary frame in pen and black ink, ca. 1919

Monogram lower right in ink HW

Sheet 465 × 349 mm

Literature Bettina Greffrath, *Hermann Wöhler, Märchenbilder: Beiträge und Katalog zur Ausstellung*, Hannover, Historisches Museum, 1987

Provenance Artist's Estate, Niedersachsen

Hermann Wöhler work is one of the best rediscoveries made for the German art of the 1920s. Obvious influences were thereby the main protagonists of the 16th c. Danube School such as Albrecht Altdorfer and Wolf Huber. Moreover 19th c. artists, like Philipp Otto Runge and its ornamental symbolism, and mainly Hugo Hoeppener, known as Fidus, whose work combined mysticism, eroticism and allegory, had strong influence on him (the latter has been Wöhler's teacher). The present work displays a genuine originality. Indeed, instead of presenting the paradise landscape as the original but lost state of the world, Wöhler is inviting at an unexpected by magnificent discovery: at the end of a shadowy tunnel, there is a soft path leading to the eternal light. It then recalls the *The Ascent of the Blessed* by Jerominus Bosh, at the Museo di Palazzo Grimani, in Venice.

The young Hermann Wöhler started studying in his native Hanover, and then at the *Kunstgewerbeakademie* in Dresden and at the *Staatlichen Kunsthochschule* in Berlin, where he was named in 1923 *Akademischer Zeichenlehrer*, i.e. drawing teacher. An intellectual man, Wöhler was well-versed in German art, history, philosophy and classical literature, as well as in Oriental and Eastern religions, Gnosticism and the Kabbalah. From the start of his career, Wöhler did indeed take his subjects from the German mythology and literature but transforming then in striking works characterized by unconventional, sometimes bizarre imagery and appealing imaginative compositions.

Wöhler worked in black and white, producing elaborate large-scale drawings in pen and ink. In 1918 his first work was a portfolio of seven large ink compositions, plus a title page, under the title *Zwielicht: Sieben Sinnbilder / Erste Geschichte des Erwachenden Schicksals vor dem Licht* [Twilight: Seven Symbols / The First History of the Awakening Fate of Light], and he then pursued in creating series of sizeable ink drawings throughout the 1920s. The so-called series were often not a precise program at the very beginning of the process, and most of them have not been kept together, which make somehow difficult to size its meaning.

These fantastic drawings are very rare to find. From 1934 until his death in 1961, Wöhler served as a Professor of art at the *Pädagogischen Kunsthochschule* in Hanover. His long career as an art teacher largely precluded him from selling or exhibiting his own work, and his oeuvre was completely unknown to the public in his lifetime. Later in his career, Wöhler turned towards fairy-tale themes, producing tempera paintings of such subjects, for the most part executed in the 1940s, as a reaction to the horrors of war. It was not until 1987, that the first exhibition of Wöhler's work was mounted, at the *Historischen Museum* in Hanover. In January 2015, the *Deutsches Märchen und Wesersagenmuseum* held an exhibition of sixty paintings, commemorating the acquisition by the museum, from his heirs, of over two hundred works.



27 Svend Hammershøi 1873 – Copenhagen – 1948

Frederiksborg Castle's Audience House

Oil on canvas, ca. 1920's

Canvas 80 × 69 cm

Provenance Private collection, Sweden

Svend Hammershøi and his world-famous older brother Vilhelm were close and influenced each other. The latter specialized in interior paintings and Svend focused on landscape, often on old buildings of cultural and historical significance. Their work is in several aspects related. Both painters worked with a very restricted palette and used similar and sometimes the same motives over and over again. The painters were not interested in a realistic depiction of their motives. The spatial and spiritual context, in which their subjects are presented was important and an essential part of the composition. They display emotional spaces evoking melancholic feelings of the past, emptiness, greatness, timeless. *Frederiksborg Castle's Audience House* contains all the characteristics of Sven's work. Shades of green, brown and grey dominate his landscapes. Svend painted Frederiksborg Castle, seen from different angles, at least sixty times¹.

The castle was built as a royal residence for King Christian IV of Denmark-Norway at the beginning of the 17th century. The castle is the largest Renaissance residence in Scandinavia. The Audience House is connected but located next to the Castle. It contains the oldest baroque room in Denmark. Svend included the water of a canal quietly reflecting the building. Other versions of the same motif, seen from different angles, don't show any water. Within a symbolist landscape, painting a water surface is the preferred motif to connect the outside world with spiritual life. The first is a metaphor for the second and mirrors the mythical past, a link also used by other Symbolist painters, as for instance Fernand Khnopff². The absence of human presence in *Frederiksborg Castle's Audience House* is typical within Svend's oeuvre. It avoids distraction.

Like his brother, Svend was part of the international Avant-Garde and Symbolist movement of the time.

From 1890, he studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen for two years, until enrolling at the Kunsternes Frie Studeieskoler under Kristian Zahrtmann until 1897. The painter, still student, had his breakthrough: His work was shown at the Kleis Gallery in Copenhagen in 1892. The gallery exhibited beside the best contemporary Danish artists, international ones like Pierre Bonnard, Eduard Vuillard, Paul Sérusier, Vincent van Gogh, Emile Bernard. It also hosted Eduard Munch's first solo exhibition in 1890's. Hammershøi was commissioned to illustrate the symbolist magazine *Taarnet* in 1893. He was a member of an artists' colony named Hellenerne on the Resnaes peninsula from 1895 to 1903. Where most members focused on their shared Greek ideals, Svend concentrated on ancient Nordic history. His first solo exhibition was staged at the Kunstforeningen in Copenhagen, in 1909. He was awarded prizes and awards for his paintings and his ceramics. In 1910, a grant enabled him to spend four years in England where he made works of Gothic architectures in Wells and Oxford. He returned to England between the wars, exhibiting at the Royal Institute of British Architects, and at Ryman's Galleries in Oxford in 1929. He exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1931³. Hammershøi's work has been overshadowed by Vilhelm's success. An exhibition organized by the Skovgaard, Øregaard and Naestved Museum in 2008 showed his drawings, paintings, ceramics and silverware. There is an increasing interest in his work over the last years.

1. Tove Jørgensen, *Svend Hammershøi 1873-1948*, Koldinghus 1990, pp. 109-10

2. Exh. cat., *Dekadenz und dunkle Träume Der belgische Symbolismus*, Berlin 2020, p.187

3. Exh. cat., *Hammershøi and Europe*, Copenhagen 2014, p. 225



28 **Léon Navez** 1900 Mons – Auderghem 1967

Portrait of Gustave van Geluwe

Oil on canvas, 1925
Canvas 70 × 55,5 cm
Literature M. De Reymaeker, et al., *Léon Navez: une Peinture de L'Âme*, Empain Solutions Graphiques, 2015, p. 173 (ill.)
Provenance Collection Gustave van Geluwe, until 2016

A superb portrait of Gustave Van Geluwe, one of Belgium's most influential collector of the time by Léon Navez. The painter was born in Mons, Belgium where he first studied before moving on to the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. There he took courses in decorative arts but also pursued painting with Anto Carte, who was to be his mentor and friend. In 1924 Navez's talent was recognized as he won the Prix Godecharle, which allowed him to go to Paris where he remained until 1928. In Paris he certainly became familiar with the developments of Cubism but was also influenced by the work of Modigliani. Following his return home, Navez won the Belgian Prix de Rome, went to Italy where he experienced the face-to-face encounter with the Renaissance frescos by Giotto. On his return to Belgium, Navez split his time between teaching in both Mons and Brussels. He was an active member of the Belgian art establishment and one of the founding members in late 1928 of the Nervia Group of artists from the province of Hainaut. With his colleagues of this group, he created the official decorations for the 1935 Exposition Universelle in Brussels. During the war years he contributed to the resistance. Late in his life in 1956 he visited the Congo.

The subject of this portrait, Gustave Van Geluwe (1881-1962), first established himself as a tailor in Brussels in

1910 and eventually founded there a successful *haute couture* house, illustrated here with a background of drawings of fashion models. In addition to this business, he was also a distinguished art collector and focused especially on the Belgian school with such well-known masters as Ensor and Permeke. But Van Geluwe also collected works by many younger contemporary Belgian painters. Like Helena Rubinstein, he commissioned a number of portraits of himself from these artists.

The plain directness of Navez's 1925 Portrait of Gustave Van Geluwe is oddly reminiscent of the realistic portraits being produced at just this time by the German painters of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity). Although he did not visit Germany, it is certainly possible that while in Paris Navez saw examples or reproductions of works by such leading artists of this movement as Otto Dix, Christian Schad, and Rudolf Schlichter, but he never followed them in their extreme departure into Expressionism or caricature, instead he remained faithful to his modest Belgian roots, continuing to produce his own unique, often somewhat haunting, poetic portraits.



29 **Almo Bonaldi** 1890 Carrara – Toulon 1966

Bust of a man

Marble, 1935
Signed *PROF. BONALDI*, on the front, dated 7 – 5 – 1935/*TOULON*, on the left shoulder
Size 41 × 31 × 18 cm
Provenance Private collection, France

This mysterious marble is imbued with dramatic intensity. Turned towards the sky, the face of the man represented is contorted by fear and tension. His eyes are suggested merely by two fine slots, that underline these emotions and evoke the tragic mask of the classical theatre. His horizontal mouth, exposing one row of teeth, confirm this dramatic tension. It could be read as suggestive of a desperate cry, as attributed by Virgil to the priest Laocoön, while defending himself against two monstrous snakes. Or quite the opposite, a suppressed cry, as interpreted by Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in their respective study of the antique.

The back of the bust has been left uncarved by the sculptor, as if intended as a high relief. The treatment of the face, with its smoothed and simplified features, recalls the Italian sculpture as it was taught at the *Accademia di belle arti di Carrara* by sculptors such as Carlo Fontana, around the beginning of twentieth century.

The signature “Prof. Bonaldi” could be attributed to the Italian sculptor Almo Bonaldi. In 1924, his name is mentioned as the owner of a sculpture studio specialized

in marble in the city of Carrara. In 1930, he participated to the Premio Reale-Premio Dervillé at the *Accademia di belle arti di Carrara*, with a sculpture representing a young centaur. This official sculpture contest was organized by the academy in collaboration with the marble industrialists of the region, which might explain why Almo Bonaldi participated. Later on, his presence in Toulon (France) could be linked to the founding of an enterprise of marble masons, under the name Bonaldi, around 1930 in the region. Still active today, the company seems to have furnished stones for some of the public fountains in the center of Toulon. In the context of this migration, Almo Bonaldi might have continued his artistic practice and teaching, as his signature on the present piece suggests it, in the south of France.

1. Ministero delle finanze, Direzione generale delle imposte dirette, *Imposta sui redditi di ricchezza mobile, elenco dei contribuenti privati possessori di redditi incerti e variabili*, Provincia di Massa-Carrara, Roma, Libreria dello Stato, 1924, p. 30.
2. Renato Carozzi, “Marmo ad ogni costo: L’Accademia di Carrara tra il 1890 e il 1950”, in *X Biennale internazionale Città di Carrara: il primato della scultura: il Novecento a Carrara e dintorni*, Firenze, Maschietto & Musolino, 2000, p. 147.



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