



A N N A D E W E E R T 1 8 9 5 - 1 9 5 0

Ducklings on the river Lys (Golden Hour)

Circa: 1923

1923

Oil on canvas

74 x 61 cm

Signed lower left: A. De Weert

Signed and dated on reverse: Anna De Weert / Afsnee / Oct 1923

Verso:

Old label (torn off), presumably *Exposition Rétrospective 1894-1937 Anna De Weert-Cogen*, Ghent, Royal Circle of Art & Literature, 31.01-11.02.1938.

Inscription on the canvas: Anna De Weert / Afsnee / 3 4 / Oct 1923/1926

Inscription on the frame: Sept Oct vas a couchant / 61 x 74 / L'heure dorée / Anna De Weert / Gand / rue des hospices

Anna De Weert led a double life between the more sophisticated Ghent citizenry - as the wife of the Ghent politician Maurice De Weert - and the rural Afsnee. In 1895 her mother bought the estate "Hof ter Neuve" in Afsnee. This farm is located on the inside of a Leiebocht, near the Three Leien, and surrounded by an orchard and a flowery garden.

A studio space was built on the farm, of which De Weert and Emile Claus laid the foundation stone together in April 1904. In the mantelpiece the following words were edited: Lumière, Amour, Vie. Two of these are from 1904 embodied the association of artists founded by Claus: Vie et Lumière.

The painting 't Gulden uur or Eenden op de Leie clearly illustrates the artist's love for light and nature. The indirect sunlight falls here on the Leieland in the autumn and is reflected in the river. The blue light is thus scattered and the golden glow is relatively more present. With expressive brushstrokes and fresh pastel colors, De Weert exemplified the change that nature underwent in this golden hour. More than with Claus, her test is flakier and more chaotic; her paint is heavier and piecemeal. In the depth of the colors she deliberately lets the cloth play along. This makes the painting more lively. The graceful group of ducks on the water brings direct movement into the composition. For De Weert, nature and light are inextricably linked. Nature embodies the light, and light identifies nature in its existence and its appearance. In the 1920s De Weert was certainly not ignored by art criticism. She was repeatedly featured in the leading magazine *Gand Artistique*. Both in group and solo she participated in Belgian salons including the Brussels Cercle Artistique et Littéraire and the Ghent Royal Arts and Literary Society. Of the eighty paintings exhibited for her retrospective exhibition in 1938, this painting was selected and it is mentioned in the accompanying catalog.

Exhibitions

- 1938, Ghent, *Exposition Rétrospective 1894-1937 Anna De Weert-Cogen*, Koninklijke Kunst- & Letterkring, 31.01-11.02.1938.

Literature

- De Smet, J., *Sint-Martens-Latem en de kunst aan de Leie 1870-1970* (Tielt/Sint-Martens-Latem: Lannoo/Art Book Company, 2000), 100-112.
- Goyens de Heusch, S., *Het impressionisme en het fauvisme in België* (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1988), 226-233.
- Steel, R. & E., *Anna De Weert 'Dame de ter Neuve'* (Ghent: Galerie St.-John, 2001).
- Van Doorne, V., *Retrospectieve tentoonstelling Anna De Weert, Jenny Montigny, Yvonne Serruys*, exhib. cat. (Deinze: MuDeL, 1988).

Artist description:

From the moment of her birth, Anne Virginie Caroline Cogen grew up in a closed middle-class milieu. Drawing and painting in watercolours were an undeniable part of this upbringing. Add to this the fact that both of her uncles, Felix and Alfons Cogen, were artists. The art-loving environment in which she grew up stimulated her in the direction of the fine arts, and already at a young age she was able to take private lessons from Ghent artists. She was also interested in literature; on her mother's side, she was the granddaughter of Karel Lodewijk Ledeganck.

In 1891, she married the Ghentian lawyer Maurice De Weert, who was also active as

essayist and journalist. Later De Weert became municipal councillor and alderman of the City of Ghent. At her marriage, Anna Cogen took the name of her husband. She met Claus only after her marriage, and it would be approximately 1893 before she would follow his free lessons in Villa Zonneschijn in Astene, Claus' country house on the Leie. From 1896, she had her own place on the Leie. The Hof ter Neuve in Afsnee was not so far removed from Ghent where she played a more mundane role as wife of the dignitary on Godshuizenstraat.

De Weert was the driving force behind the creation of a luminist association. Already in 1903, together with Rodolphe Wytman, she attempted to put together a group. However, this effort was blocked by Adrien-Joseph Heymans. George Morren had the same idea and together they succeeded in winning over Claus, Heymans and James Ensor to the idea; in 1904 the circle *Vie et Lumière* was a fact.

She spent the war years in Ghent, in the shadow of the war. Her spouse was deported to Germany. The oppressive situation, however, did not exclude artistic progress. On the contrary, she evidenced great talent at the first individual exhibition she organised after the war. The exhibition was certainly a society event. On the evening that her exhibition opened in the Brussels Cercle Artistique et Littéraire, reporters noted among others minister Edward Anseele, Albert Baertsoen, Emile Claus and Directeur des Beaux-Arts Paul Lambotte. For the catalogue, she was able to obtain Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert, the reputable art critic and head curator of the Brussels Royal Museums for Art and History. De Weert enjoyed presenting large ensembles. Thus in March of 1920, she displayed 77 works in Brussels; a few months later in Ghent one hundred and three paintings were exhibited.

In the 1920s, De Weert was often in Rome, where for days on end she wandered through the gardens of the eternal city, around the Villa de Medici and the Vatican. After the death of her husband in 1930, De Weert increasingly withdrew from public life. She continued to regularly appear as a speaker, among others about Claus' and her travels to the region of the Mediterranean Sea. She celebrated her final triumph in January 1938 when the art circle of her native city dedicated a large retrospective to her.

After her death, she bequeathed her art collection to the city, including the famous Portrait of Anna De Weert that Emile Claus painted of her in 1899.