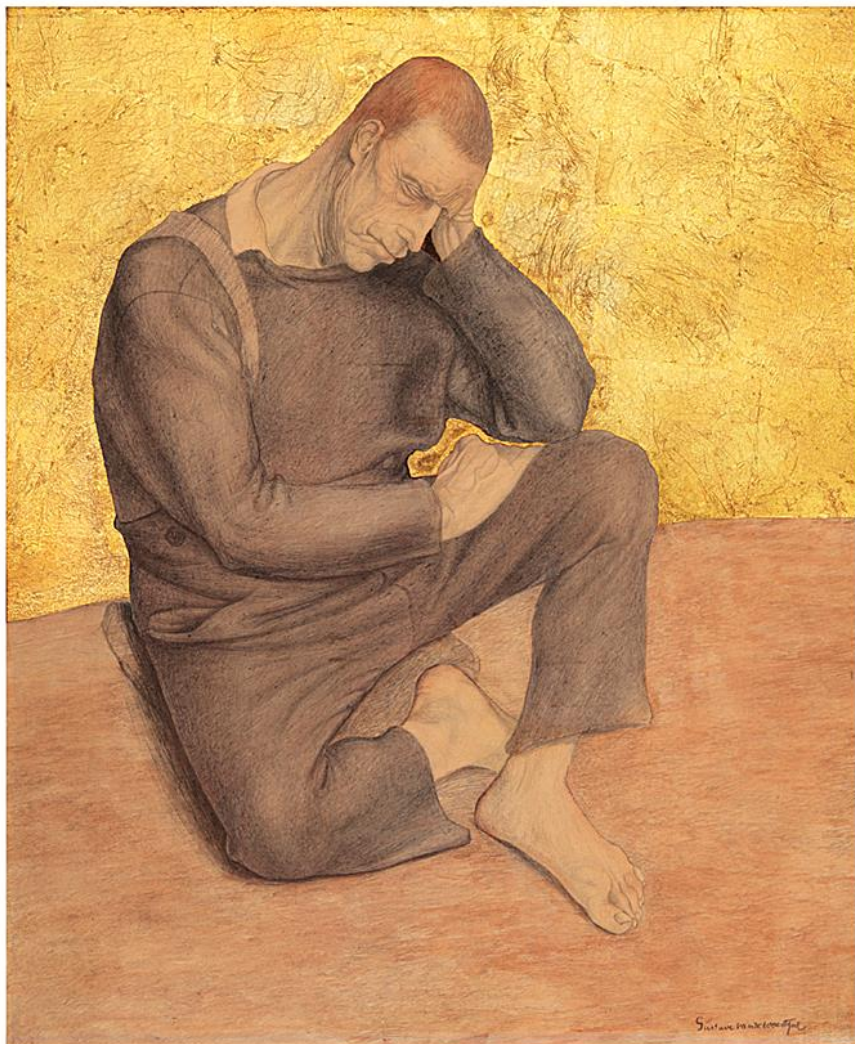


GALERIE OSCAR DE VOS



G U S T A V E V A N D I E S W I D E S T Y N E

Deeske crouched

Circa: 1908

1908

Mixed technique (gouache, watercolour, pencil, gold leaf) on paper

60 x 49 cm (23 ⁵/₈" x 19 ¹/₄")

Framed: 83,5 x 72,5 cm (32 ⁷/₈" x 28 ¹/₂")

Signed lower right: Gustave van de Woestyne

In May 1900, Gustave van de Woestyne followed his brother to Sint-Martens-Latem; apart from a few interruptions, he would stay in Leiedorp until 1909. The impressive portrait of

Deeske crouching down fits into the series of peasant heads that Van de Woestyne made between 1908 and 1914. Deeske appears repeatedly as a model. The artist had an intense bond with the peasant, who embodies precisely the simplicity and spiritual power that Van de Woestyne sought in Latem. The work is one of the most mature works

in the series. Although according to tradition Deeske was a small, stocky man, here he has the grandeur of a classical hero. He has only temporarily thrown off the yoke of hard labour. In an idealistic landscape, he is completely introverted, absorbed in his own thoughts. Besides the monumentality of the figure, the linear character of the almost drawn representation is striking: the grooves in the man's face, his strange posture, the almost absence of spatiality as well. Van de Woestijn's predilection for the art of the Italian and also Flemish Primitives, which he visited repeatedly at the Bruges exhibition in 1902, is evident from the background. The artist did not opt for a landscape view, but covered the background with gold leaf, an ancient symbol of purity.

Exhibitions

- 2001, Ghent/ Deinze/ Deurle, Museum of Fine Arts/ MuDeL/ Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, *Een zeldzame weelde. Kunst van Latem en Leiestreek 1900-1930*, no. 91
- 2010, Japan, Himeji City Museum of Art, Bunkamura Museum of Art & Okuda Genso Sayume Art Museum, *Light of Flandres. Images of a beautiful Belgian Village*, no. 37
- 2017, Ghent, Caermersklooster, *OER. De wortels van Vlaanderen*.

Literature

- Boyens, P., *Een zeldzame weelde. Kunst van Latem en de Leiestreek 1900-1930*, exh. cat. (Ghent/Amsterdam: Ludion, 2001), 76, no. 91 (ill.)
- Boyens, P., B. van der Giessen, A. van Lienden e.a., *Bevriende Meesterschilders*, exh. cat. (Spanbroek: Scheringa Museum voor Realisme, 2008), 50-51, 92, no. 23 (ill.).
- De Geest, J. e.a., *Gustave Van de Woestyne 1881-1947* (Ghent: SD&Z-Pandora, 1997), 109, no. 9 (ill.).
- De Smet, J., *Sint-Martens-Latem en de Kunst aan de Leie 1870-1970* (Tielt/Zwolle: Lannoo/Waanders, 2000), 175 (ill.)
- Hoozee, R., D. Lampens, P. Baudson e.a., *De eerste groep van Sint-Martens-Latem 1899-1914*, exh. cat. (Brussels: KMSKB, 1988), 177, no. 55 (ill.)
- Hoozee, R., M. Miyazawa, *Light of Flandres. Images of a beautiful Belgian Village*, exh. cat. (Japan: Himeji City Museum of Art, Bunkamura Museum of Art & Okuda Genso Sayume Art Museum, 2010), 57, no. 25 (ill.)
- Pauwels, P.J.H., *Als een fonkelenden spiegel* (Sint-Martens-Latem: Galerie Oscar De Vos, 2019), 155 (ill.).
- Van Cauteren, K. e.a., *OER. De wortels van Vlaanderen*, exh. cat. (Tielt/Antwerpen: Lannoo/The Phoebus Foundation, 2017), 178-179, (ill.).
- Van Cauteren, K. e.a., *OER. Coming home. Flemish art 1880-1930*, (Tielt/Antwerpen: Lannoo/The Phoebus Foundation, 2017), 156-157 (ill.).

Artist description:

In his youth, Gustave Van de Woestyne studied at the Ghent Academy for the Fine Arts. Nevertheless, he was the brother of the painter Karel, who introduced him to the Ghent artistic and intellectual environment to which he had access. At the side of his brother, Van de Woestyne received an intellectual education that ushered him, already at a young age, into the world of literature, classical music and sculpture.

Then in 1900, barely 19 years old, Van de Woestyne went to Sint-Martens-Latem in the company of his brother. The inexperienced academy student was confronted with the sophisticated intellectualism of George Minne. With Valerius De Saedeleer and Jules de Praetere, they formed the nucleus of the so-called first Latem group that was

characterised by its symbolist aspirations.

As young artist, Van de Woestyne was noticed quite quickly, and in the years before the First World War, he was able to participate in important international exhibitions in Amsterdam, The Hague and Venice. He was also a guest of the Brussels' avant-garde group La Libre Esthétique.

Van de Woestyne lived in Latem until 1909. At that moment, the so-called first-symbolist-group had disbanded. Nostalgia for the Latem years caused him to follow Valerius De Saedeleer to Tiegem, where he lived until 1913. Nearby, in Ingoigem, resided another friend, the writer Stijn Streuvels, for whom in 1909 he illustrated the rewriting of the medieval beast epic Reynard the Fox. In 1913, he visited Firenze with De Saedeleer.

He fled, together with the De Saedeleer family, at the beginning of the war, and via Sint-Anna-ter-Muiden, Ostend and London ended the journey in Wales. He lived for some time in the seaside town of Aberystwyth. Afterwards he lived in Llandiloes, the village in which George Minne also spent his exile. Wales, however, was unable to seduce him; in 1915 and 1916, he regularly travelled to London. He finally moved to the British capital in 1917. These London connections brought with them relative well-being. Especially his contacts with the Dutch couple Jacob De Graaff-Bachiene were of decisive importance. This friendly relation and the success he enjoyed in Great Britain even caused him to doubt returning to Belgium at the end of the war.

Back in Belgium, he spent a number of years at the Rozenhuis in Waregem. Modest Huys had also previously stayed in the house of the De Sutter family; after Van de Woestyne, Jules De Sutter took up residence there. He lived in Mechelen from 1925, where he was appointed as general manager of the Academy for the Fine Arts. In the same year he became a painting teacher at the National Higher Institute for the Fine Arts in Antwerp; from 1928 to 1931, he taught monumental painting at the Higher Institute for Decorative Art of Ter Kameren in Brussels.

These official assignments, however, did not prevent Van de Woestyne from remaining a part of the avant-garde. Thus, in 1925 he was the guest of the Brussels modernistic gallery Le Centaure. In 1929, was he was the solo guest of the newly opened Brussels Centre for Fine Arts. In 1926, he also was part of the artistic circle Les 9 that included among others Gustave De Smet and Frits Van den Berghe. Ten years later, together with this group, he became a member of the high-profile circle Les Compagnons de l'Art. Internationally, he was also considered part of the avant-garde. Thus, he was a notable participant in the exhibition L'Art Belge in Grenoble in 1926. On the other hand, from 1928 Van de Woestyne enjoyed the patronage of the Brussels couple David and Alice van Buuren. Their visionary collection today constitutes the most important collection of Van de Woestyne's work in the public domain, on display at the van Buuren Museum in Uccle.