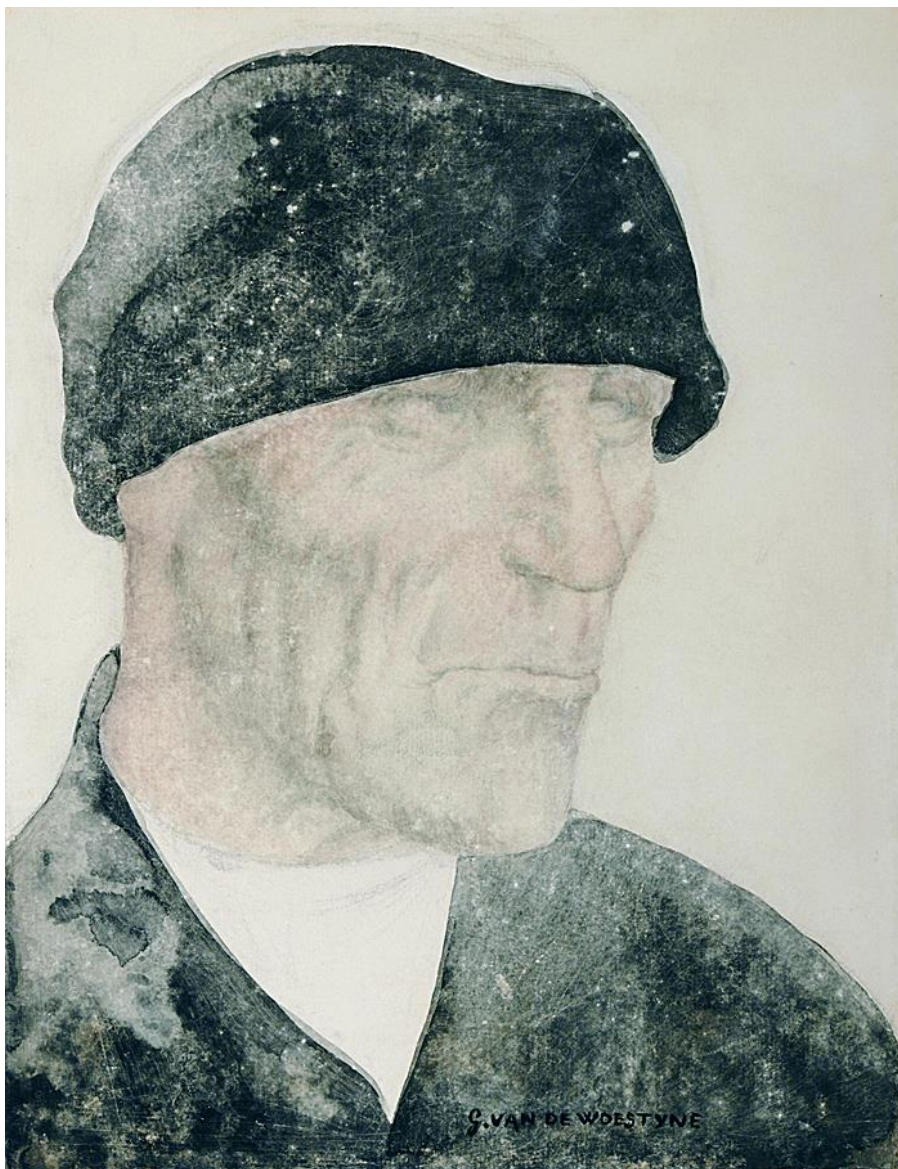


GALERIE OSCAR DE VOS



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

The blind man

Circa: 1914

1914

Gouache and watercolor on paper

32 x 25 cm

Signed lower right: G. Van de Woestyne

In May 1900, Gustave van de Woestyne followed his brother Karel to Sint-Martens-Latem.

The discovery of the simple country life in Sint-Martens-Latem is accompanied by a deep religiosity. *The blind* was made in 1914. Meanwhile he has left the Leie village and the artist stays in Tiegem. But even after his departure from the Leiedorp, he sticks to the Latem typology. In addition to the series of farmers, *The blind* is a striking example of his

early portraits. The clothing and background are not detailed but displayed monumentally on the image plane. The head of the blind is shown in all its details. As with the other blind, the artist has had a special eye for the fascinating face with the many wrinkles and dead eyes. This type of blind keeps the eyes half-open and a smile plays around the mouth. The man is calm and calm, despite his heavy handicap.

The transparent way of painting was apparently not used by chance. It corresponds to the pious resignation of the blind man and with his quiet life acceptance. In a succinct way, the relationship of the artist to his model is presented here as a like-minded, inner satisfaction.

It is not easy to trace allegory or symbolism in every work by Van de Woestyne. Is there a real hope for this blind man or did the painter think of the biblical saying "Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe"?

Exhibitions

- Ghent, Museum of Fine Arts, *Gustave Van de Woestyne*, no. 92, 27.03-27.06.2010.

Literature

- Boyens, P., *Sint-Martens-Latem. Kunstenaarsdorp in Vlaanderen* (Tielt/Sint-Martens-Latem: Lannoo/Art Book Company, 1992), pp. 257-293, 636 (ill.).
- De Geest, J. e.a., *Gustave Van de Woestyne 1881-1947* (Gent: Snoeck-Ducaju/ Pandora, 1997), pp. 114-128.
- Hoozee, R. & C. Verleysen, *Gustave Van de Woestyne*, exh. cat. (Gent: MSK, 2010), p. 92, no. 32 (ill.).
- Gepts, G., *Gustave Van de Woestyne 1881-1947*, exh. cat. (Antwerpen: KMSKA, 1981), pp. 39-41.
- Pauwels, P.J.H., *Als een fonkelenden spiegel* (Sint-Martens-Latem: Galerie Oscar De Vos, 2019), p. 160 (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 Llandiloos, 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.