

GALERIE OSCAR DE VOS



V A L E R I U S D E I S A G E L D E L E E R

Snow landscape at dusk

Circa: 1924

1924

Oil on canvas

87 x 96 cm (34 1/4 x 37 3/4 inches)

Frame: 104 x 115 cm (41 x 45 1/4 inches)

Signed and dated lower right: Valerius de Saedeleer / 1924

After a restless bohemian existence, Valerius De Saedeleer settled in the artists' village of Sint-Martens-Latem in 1898. After his exile in Wales, he finds his home in Etikhove on the Bossenaersheuvel. Charmed by the mystical atmosphere, he finally finds his way. A visit to the exhibition of the Flemish Primitives in Bruges in 1902 inspired his style. He transferred their meditative peace, fine brushwork and linear drawing to the Slate landscape and later to the Flemish Ardennes. With Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow* in mind, he creates an ideal Flemish landscape in winter. Under a massive grey sky, a gently undulating vista dotted with humble farms unfolds. Silent bare black trees bring structure and rhythm to the panorama of this archetypal Flemish winter, unwavering as a Flemish farmer. (F. Huygens)

Snow landscape at dusk is one of the finest examples of the mature painting style of

Valerius de Saedeleer. At that time he has been active as a painter for more than thirty years, evolving from the late realism of Franz Courtens and the luminism of Emile Claus, to a particularly personal symbolism. After World War I, the sloping surroundings of Etikhove became his base as a painter. He often painted the landscape from the same angle, regardless of the seasons. There are different versions of this landscape, seen from the top of the Bossenaar hill with the undulating landscape in the distance. The row of trees in the foreground is used as a screen, as an introduction to the landscape. As the seasons succeed each other, the color of the landscape and the sky also changes. In *Snow Landscape at night*, the colors are muted by the winter light of the setting sun. Furthermore, the composition is roughly evenly divided into a land and air party. In the panoramic landscape De Saedeleer repeatedly used a row of trees as a border between different zones. Other transitions are less radical, and merge harmoniously. Of all the versions, *Snow landscape* has most of the time retained an authentic and independent character. The landscape is shrouded in peace, all sound and movement seem to have been smothered by the snow. The successive snow zones give a special rhythm to the painting. The elegant line of the tree trunks soften the horizontalism of the painting, which is determined by the almost straight line of the horizon. The naked crowns cut through the thin freezing air, which is painted as a sliding glaze in the landscapes of Flemish primitives. *Snow landscape at dusk* is of profound beauty and intrigues at the same time through the combination of line and color. Here the bucolic richness of the Flemish landscape is brought in a way that combines silence with the spirit, nature with symbolism.

Exhibitions

- 1933, Aalst, Belfortzaal (Townhall), *Valerius De Saedeleer*, cat. no. 8.
- 1967, Aalst, Oud-Hospitaal, *Retrospectieve tentoonstelling Valerius De Saedeleer*, 07-29.10.1967, cat. no. 86.
- 2006, Deinze, MuDeL, *Valerius De Saedeleer. De tuin der afwezigen*, 23.09-26.11.2006, no. 76 (ill.).
- 2008, Spanbroek, Scheringa Museum voor Realisme, *Bevriende Meesterschilders Valerius De Saedeleer en Gustave Van de Woestyne*, 19.10.2008-01.02.2009, no. 15.

Literature

- Eemans, M., "Valerius De Saedeleer," unpublished master proof (Gent: UGent, 1975), no. 119, ill. 89.
- Boyens, P. *Sint-Martens-Latem. Kunstenaarsdorp in Vlaanderen* (Tielt/Sint-Martens-Latem: Lannoo/Art Book Company, 1992), p. 591 (ill.).
- Boyens, P. & V. Van Doorne, *Valerius De Saedeleer. De tuin der afwezigen*, exh. cat. (Tielt/Deinze: Lannoo/MuDeL, 2006), pp. 117, 125, 189, no. 72 (ill.).
- Van der Giessen, B., A. van Lienden & M. Windhausen (red.), *Valerius de Saedeleer, Gustave Van de Woestyne. Bevriende meesterschilders*, exh. cat. (Spanbroek: Scheringa museum voor realisme, 2008), pp. 34, 40, 92, no. 15 (ill.).
- Bourdeaudhui, J., *Valerius De Saedeleer* (Maarkedal: Heemkundige Kring, 2014), 230-231, no. 11.79 en 11.82 (ill.).
- Pauwels, P.J.H., *Als een fonkelenden spiegel* (Sint-Martens-Latem: Galerie Oscar De Vos, 2019), p. 206 (ill.).

Artist description:

As son of a soap-boiler, De Saedeleer was born in the folk district De Kat in Aalst. His father tried with little success to engage him in the family business. Without consulting anyone, he registered at the Ghent Academy for the Fine Arts, where he met George

Minne and Théo van Rysselberghe. Ultimately-barely twenty years old-he would escape the parental home and move to Brussels, where he frequented the atelier of Franz Courtens. De Saedeleer would work more than fifteen year under the supervision of Courtens.

Of major importance was his marriage in 1889 to his childhood girlfriend from Aalst, Clementine Limpens. After wandering for some time together, 'Clemmeke' and 'Valleke' would settle in Sint-Martens-Latem. It was probably the far-sighted Albijn Van den Abeele who brought them to the village in 1893. However, turbulent Ghent beckoned, and together with Minne he steeped himself in socialism and anarchism. They returned to the village in 1898; Van den Abeele had found accommodations for them at the bend in the Leie in the centre of the village. The drifter stayed in the village for almost ten years. De Saedeleer in turn probably expedited Minne's Latem sojourn. At that moment, he was barely able to make a living as painter. De Saedeleer unsuccessfully tried to survive as chicken farmer.

Important was the psychological catharsis that De Saedeleer underwent in the village. Mentors such as George Minne and Karel van de Woestijne certainly played in a role in this. On the other hand, via his Latem friends he also discovered medieval art. The 1902 exhibition of Flemish Primitives was certainly the particular impetus for an artistic turnabout. 'Valleke' came to repentance in Latem. Perhaps thanks to Minne, he gradually received the opportunity to display his work in the international avant-garde circuit; the Berlin, Munich and Viennese Secession presented his work.

The purifying influence of Latem notwithstanding, in 1908 his drifter's blood again brought De Saedeleer to other places. The hilly country around Tiegem beckoned to him. He had his house, 'Ten Berge', built on the crest of a hill. He encountered his friends, the writers Stijn Streuvels and Hugo Verriest, in the immediate vicinity.

De Saedeleer and his family spent the war years in Welsh Rhyd-y-felin. His wartime work was a modest success in Great Britain. In February 1916, he was even given the chance to organise an individual exhibition in Aberystwyth. Via Gustave Van de Woestyne, he came into contact with the Dutch couple De Graaff-Bachiene. The collectors-who owned works by Constant Permeke, Van de Woestyne and Minne-would also purchase paintings by De Saedeleer. Just before his return to Belgium, the Burlington Gallery organised an exhibition of his work in 1921.

Back in Belgium, De Saedeleer settled in Etikhove, near Oudenaarde. His adult daughters put their British education to use and established an atelier for hand woven carpet in Oudenaarde.

In the 1930s, De Saedeleer disappeared from the artistic scene. Withdrawn in the Flemish Ardennes, he would emerge again one more time. In 1940, the Dietrich Gallery in Brussels organised a retrospective of his work.

Barely a year later, on 16 September 1941, De Saedeleer died in Leupegem. Thus, two leading figures of the first Sint-Martens-Latem group disappeared in the same year; George Minne died in February at the Witte huis in Sint-Martens-Latem.