



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

Farm under snow

Circa: Circa 1926

Circa 1926

Oil on canvas

125 x 130 cm (49 1/4 x 51 1/8 inches)

Signed lower right: Valerius de Saedeleer

After the war years, Valerius De Saedeleer settled in Etikhove in 1921, on top of the Bossenaers hill. The artist named his new home Villa Tynlon, a direct reference to the past years of exile in Wales. From the top of the hill the artist had a splendid view of the surroundings, as far as the horizon.

The panorama, which in reality is a complex combination of hills and valleys, is the subject of this painting, which is one of the most successful winter landscapes of the 1920s. A master's hand can be seen in the way the space is perfectly arranged. The landscape slips seamlessly from one zone to another. Opposite the land is the unfathomable sky, which reflects its brownish-yellow evening light on the roofs of the farmhouses. It has often been pointed out that the winter landscapes of De Saedeleer are related to those of Pieter Bruegel I. Both artists had a predilection for the panorama, the landscape as an ordered vista as well. A particularly refined technique connects them, as well as the quality of leaving out the detail and, through the synthesis,

emphasising the grandeur of nature. De Saedeleer, on the other hand, did not put a social message in his work. For him, the suggestion of an unfathomable nature prevailed. He searched for a way to depict the deeper being of nature, and for its eternal values. By purifying the landscape, he turned it into a perfect panorama that radiates timelessness and eternity. The farmstead and the large barn that form the foreground of Great Winter View recur in various paintings from this period. De Saedeleer always placed them in a different way, in search of the ultimate composition. In its most classical form, as here, the buildings have become one with the immovable peace of the landscape, in a wintery stillness that spans the whole of nature.

Exhibitions

- 1978, Ostend, Kursaal, *Sint-Martens-Latem and the painters of the Leie-country*, 24.06.1978-27.08.1978, cat.no. 23 (ill.).
- 2006, Deinze, MuDeL, *Valerius De Saedeleer. De tuin der afwezigen*, 23.09-26.11.2006, cat.no. 87.
- 2008, Spanbroek, Scheringa Museum voor Realisme, *Valerius De Saedeleer en Gustave Van de Woestyne: Bevriende Meesterschilders*, 19.10.2008 - 01.02.2009, cat.no. 15.
- 2010, Japan, *Light of Flandres. Images of a beautiful Belgian Village*, Himeji City Museum of Art, Bunkamura Museum of Art & Okuda Genso Sayume Art Museum, 10.07.2010-10.01.2011, no. 17.
- 2017, Ghent, Caermersklooster, OER. De wortels van Vlaanderen, 15.03.2017-06.08.2017, cat. p. 74-75.

Literature

- Boyens, P., *Valerius De Saedeleer. De tuin der afwezigen*, exh. cat. (Deinze: MDL, 2006), 130, 135, 189, no. 87 (ill.).
- Enzinck, W., *Sint-Martens-Latem oder die Geburt des Flämischen Expressionismus*, exh. cat. (Lahnstein: Calatra Press, 1979) (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), 52, 142, no. 21 (ill.).
- Otte, W., *Sint-Martens-Latem en de schilders van de Leiestreek*, exh. cat. (Oostende: Kursaal, 1978), 33, cat.no. 23 (ill.).
- Pauwels, P.J.H., *Als een fonkelenden spiegel* (Sint-Martens-Latem: Galerie Oscar De Vos, 2019), 202 (ill.).
- Thys, H., "Vlaamse schilderkunst te Latem," in: *Mauretus*, exh. cat. (Antwerpen: Verzekeringsmaatschappij Mauretus, 1978) (ill.).
- Van Cauteren, K. e.a. (ed.), *OER. De wortels van Vlaanderen*, tent.cat. (Antwerp/Ghent: The Phoebus Foundation/ Caermersklooster, 2017), 74-75 (ill.).
- Van Cauteren, K. e.a. (ed.), *Coming home. Flemish Art 1880-1930* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2020), 74-75 (ill.).
- Van der Giessen, B., A. van Lienden & M. Windhausen (ed.), *Valerius de Saedeleer, Gustave Van de Woestyne. Bevriende meesterschilders*, exh. cat. (Spanbroek: Scheringa museum voor realisme, 2008), 33, 36, no. 17 (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.