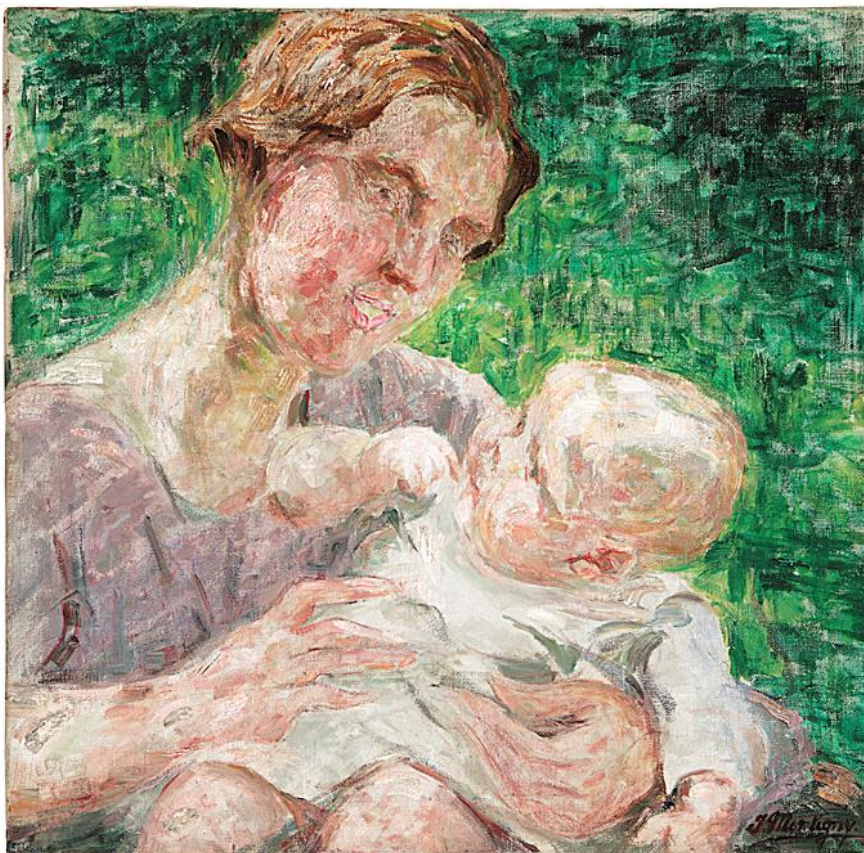


GALERIE OSCAR DE VOS



J E N N Y M O N T I G N Y

Maternity

Circa: Circa 1928

Circa 1928

Oil on canvas

58.5 x 59.5 cm

Framed: 78.5 x 79.5 cm

Signed lower right: J Montigny

Jenny Montigny had a strong bond with Emile Claus, the master of luminism. It was initially thanks to and later alongside him that she developed into an independent personality on the artistic scene of the early twentieth century. Montigny came from Ghent's bourgeoisie and led a protected life until she decided at the age of seventeen to devote herself to painting. Despite the many oppositions and her total lack of artistic experience, she joined Emile Claus and his Luminist School in 1895. Claus taught her a great sense of space, movement and light, as well as his love of nature and his preference for pleinairism. Montigny's relationship with the 26 years older and married Claus was both educational and affective and played a dominant role in the life and work of the artist. From the turn of the century, however, Montigny developed into an independent artist with her own theme, brushwork and use of color. In 1904 she settled permanently in Deurle and that same year she became a member of the luminist art

circle Vie et Lumière. Once she had mastered luminism, she used the technique to capture movement on paper or canvas with soft and contrasting colors. Montigny painted still lifes, landscapes, interior views and especially scenes with human figures. Mother Joy is a good example of the way in which she managed to affect daily life. In contrast to Claus' social realism, silk emphasized anecdotal charm of peasant life. The same idea can also be found in The Playground in Deurle in the spring, a work that takes its own place in the oeuvre of the artist. Apart from the scenes from Hyde Park - dating from the war years - and the numerous portraits of Claus, there are hardly any male figures in her work. She mainly focused on snapshots of everyday scenes around motherhood or with children playing. At the playground of the school in Deurle, she regularly studied children playing and recorded their actions in a spontaneous and harmonious way on canvases imbued with the local atmosphere (The playground in Deurle in the spring). Like Claus, she experimented with the representation of chromatic variations during the different seasons by painting the same subject several times a year.

Jenny Montigny remained unmarried and childless. She devoted her entire life to her master and their common passion, painting. In addition to her artistic qualities and her originality, it was also thanks to her warm, vibrant personality and her human qualities that she acquired a place in the intellectual and artistic world of her time. (Van der Stighelen & West, 1999)

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Artist description:

For the first seventeen years of her life, Jenny Montigny was subject to the typical middle-class upbringing of a moneyed milieu. She had been fascinated since childhood

by art and-against the will of her father-did everything possible to achieve this goal. She discovered her great role model at the end of 1892/beginning of 1893 in the Ghent Museum for the Fine Arts: full of admiration, she stood before the painting "De IJsvogels" by Emile Claus that had just been purchased by the City. From 1895, she regularly visited Villa Zonneschijn, Claus' atelier in Astene, to follow free lessons there. In 1904, she exchanged bourgeois Ghent for an independent, uncertain existence in Villa Rustoord in Deurle.

She spent the years of the First World War in London. She was active in among others the Women's International Art Club. The war years, however, were a financial catastrophe; back in Deurle she was forced to sell her house. A smaller house on Pontstraat in Deurle followed; she had to house her atelier on Dorpsstraat. Sint-Jozef school was nearby. Here she was able to study her favourite subject undisturbed: the romping children of Deurle. However, the financial problems continued. Claus helped her on more than one occasion; after his death, she received support from her sister. In any case, this material uncertainty indicates that there were few buyers available for her work during the interwar period. Montigny disappeared a bit from the Ghent scene in the years between the two world wars; she only sporadically took part in the exhibitions of the local Cercle Artistique et Littéraire. Repeated individual exhibitions indicate that Brussels appealed to her more. Montigny's exhibitions attracted attention and her work was regularly well received in the press. Somewhat estranged from the artistic milieu, in 1937 she has died in her house on Pontstraat in Deurle.