

RONNY VAN DE VELDE



Georges Lemmen (Schaerbeek 1865 - Uccle 1916)

The Seamstress (La Couturière), 1900

Charcoal and pencil on paper
245 x 348 mm

Signed and dated lower left, and stamped with the artist's estate stamp lower right
This drawing is related to the painting with the same title, in the collection of the Musée d'Ixelles, Brussels

At the end of 1888 Georges Lemmen becomes a member of Les XX, a Brussels-based association of avant-garde artists that organizes exhibitions that also include work from like-minded foreign colleagues like Van Gogh, Signac, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, Pissarro and Seurat. As the case with Theo Van Rysselberghe and Henry van de Velde, Lemmen also becomes strongly influenced by neo-impressionism. Not only in his paintings, but also in his drawings which often have his immediate surroundings as subject, particularly women in interior settings. From 1895 on, his working method becomes freer and more spontaneous, something attributable to influence of Les Nabis (mainly Vuillard). In his earlier drawings, as well, he is not just a mere votary of Seurat. With Lemmen, the contrasts between light and dark are 'softer and more distributed around the whole of the composition' (Roger Cardon, Georges Lemmen 1865-1916). In this portrait of his wife, the last traces of Seurat's influence disappear. Here Lemmen does not aim for two-dimensional effect, the figure is separated from back- and foreground, the light flows naturally. The artist has discovered a less 'scientific' approach, one that better fits with his intimist universe, his familial micro-cosmos. It comes as no surprise that he also took up this motif in painting and in lithograph. It mirrors his personality: 'his meditative, quiet and discrete nature; his particular attention to the secret life of the people and things around him and for the essential and enduring qualities that they hide deep within; (...) his overriding need to ultimately keep his work removed from his own anxieties and torments'. (Roger Cardon) It has been said of Bonnard and Vuillard, that in their works 'the world seems to hold its breath'. In the portraits of George Lemmen, too, one finds that rare moment imagined with great talent.

Provenance:

Georges Lemmen estate, Brussels
Frederick Barker, Chicago

Artist description:

Georges Lemmen was a Belgian neo-impressionist painter. He was a member of a Belgian painter, engraver, draftsman and designer, George Lemmen, was born in 1865 in Schaerbeek. For a short period he studied at the school of drawing in St. Josse-ten-Noode. In the early 1880s he became influenced by Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec. In 1888 he joined the avant-garde group Les Vingt in

Brussels. In 1890-1893, under the influence of Théo van Rysselberghe, he moved towards Neo-Impressionism and painted numerous landscapes and portraits using the technique. He exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris and participated in Les Vingt exhibitions in Brussels. The death of Seurat in 1891 had a great impact on all the painters of the Neo-Impressionist group. By 1895 Lemmen freed himself from Pointillism and painted in a more traditional, Impressionist style, though his colors were closer to those of the Nabis-painters. During his travel to England Lemmen became interested in artifacts. His one-man show in 1913 in Brussels had a great success. In July 1915 he moved to Ukkel, where he died in July 1916. His wide-ranging work includes numerous book illustrations, posters, ceramics, carpets, drawingsf "Les XX" from 1888.