James Ensor (Ostend 1860 - Ostend 1949)

Study of my mother, 1880
Pencil on paper
Signed right under and signed and dated Ensor 1880 on the reverse
220x170mm.

Artist description:

Ensor's father, James Frederic Ensor, born in Brussels of English parents,[1] was a cultivated man who studied engineering in England and Germany.[2] Ensor's mother, was Belgian. James Ensor himself lacked interest in academic study and left school at the age of fifteen to begin his artistic training with two local painters. From 1877 to 1880, he attended the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, where one of his fellow students was Fernand Khnopff. Ensor first exhibited his work in 1881. From 1880 until 1917, he had his studio in the attic of his parents' house. His only travels were three brief trips to Paris, London, and Holland.[3]During the late 19th century much of his work was rejected as scandalous, particularly his painting Entry of Christ into Brussels (1888–89), but his paintings continued to be exhibited, and he gradually won acceptance and acclaim. In 1895 his painting The Lamp Boy (1880) was acquired by the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels, and he had his first solo exhibition in Brussels.[4] By 1920 he was the subject of major exhibitions; in 1929 he was named a Baron by King Albert, and was the subject of the Belgian composer Flor Alpaerts's "James Ensor Suite"; and in 1933 he was awarded the band of the Légion d'honneur. Even in the first decade of the 20th century, however, his production of new works was diminishing, and he increasingly concentrated on music—although he had no musical training, he was a gifted improviser on the harmonium, and spent much time performing for visitors.[5]Against the advice of friends, he remained in Ostend during World War II despite the risk of bombardment. In his old age he was an honored figure among Belgians, and his daily walk made him a familiar sight in Ostend. He died there after a short illness, on 19 November 1949.