

Eva Gonzales

La Mariée

Pastel on canvas.
Stamped with the atelier stamp Eva Gonzalès at the lower left.
462 x 382 mm. (18 1/4 x 15 in.)

Previously known only from old photographs and only recently rediscovered, the present pastel is a portrait of Jeanne Gonzalès, the artist's younger sister and favourite model, and an artist in her own right. This portrait may be dated to 1879, shortly after Eva Gonzalès's marriage to Henri Guérard. The artist often portrayed her sister in various guises, and she has here chosen to depict her dressed in Eva's own satin wedding dress. (Jeanne was, in fact, to marry Eva's widowed husband a few years after her sister's death. As Belinda Thomson has noted of the present pastel, 'Jeanne went so far as to don the artist's bridal dress when she posed for a pastel head, La mariée...a strangely prophetic act given that nine years on, she in turn would marry the same Henri Guérard following Eva's premature death in childbirth.') Eva Gonzalès painted a second pastel portrait of Jeanne wearing the same wedding dress, posed in profile to the right, which is today in a private collection. These two pastel portraits, both entitled La Mariée (The Bride), were exhibited together several times in later years.

Octave Mirbeau appears to have been one of the first to mention this particular work in print. Writing on the occasion of the posthumous retrospective exhibition of Gonzalès's work, held at the Salons de La Vie Moderne in January 1885, he noted in particular the two La Mariée pastels: 'I love the two studies of brides, which have a freshness and a tender spirit, delicious to see. I find there, in the softness of the shades, in the play of the light on the white fabric and the transparent cloud of veils, a particular caress.'

Jeanne Gonzalès seems to have posed for her sister almost daily, and more than twenty works by Eva – around a third of her surviving oeuvre - may be identified either as portraits of Jeanne8, or have her as their model. As one modern scholar has noted, 'Eva chronicled her sister's life, creating an intimate biography in paint and pastel.' The artist's preoccupation with using her sister as a model is all the more telling as she herself seems never to have produced a formal painted or drawn self-portrait. As the 19th century art historian and critic Claude Roger-Marx perceptively noted of the present pastel, 'This is her

dress of white satin, her bridal coiffure, which she will, on two occasions, make Jeanne wear. It is as if she has observed and imagined herself through this duplicate of herself that she loved, bullied, transformed as she pleased, so as to create twenty different sisters...'

Both La Mariée pastels were again singled out for praise in several reviews of the exhibition of Eva Gonzalès's work held at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris in 1914. Writing in La Chronique des Arts, the critic Louis Hautecoeur noted of the artist that, 'She achieves a true mastery of pastel: her Bridesmaids or her Brides prove it: she works with hatched strokes that confine light and shade within the continuity of their lines; she likes the subtle shades, the nuances of pale, but colourful, grays, these scenes of quiet intimacy, and some of these pastels are excellent works.' Another review of the exhibition, in the magazine Art et Décoration, noted in particular the 'small pastel portraits of women (Woman with a Red Hat, The Bride, The Bridesmaid, The Bunch of Violets)...all charming in their candour, with a very personal focus and, without seeming to be, of astonishing virtuosity in the brevity and the uniform economy of their execution.'

Executed in 1879, this splendid pastel portrait remained in Gonzalès's studio until her death, and was included in the posthumous exhibition of her work in 1885. The painting passed to her sister Jeanne Gonzalès, the model for the present work, and is listed (as 'La mariée, pastel par Eva Gonzalès') in an inventory compiled by Henri Guérard on 25 May 1897. The pastel was later recorded in the possession of the artist's son, Jean-Raymond Guérard, in 1924, and was included in an exhibition of Gonzalès's work in a Parisian gallery in 1932. After that, however, this pastel portrait was lost until its recent discovery in an American private collection. Its reappearance confirms its status as one of the finest examples of the relatively small corpus of pastels produced during the brief career of Eva Gonzalès, as well as among the most intimate and personal of all her works.

Provenance:

Among the contents of the artists studio at the time of her death in 1883
The artist's sister, Jeanne Gonzalès (later Jeanne Guérard-Gonzalès), Paris, and listed in the inventory compiled by Henri Guérard on 25 May 1897
By descent to the artist's son Jean-Raymond Guérard, Paris, by 1924
Edgardo Acosta Gallery, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles
Private collection, Seattle, Washington, until 2011.

Exhibitions

Paris, Salons de la Vie Moderne, Eva Gonzalès, 1885, no.80 Paris, Bernheim-Jeune & Cie., Exposition Éva Gonzalès, 1914, no.18 or no.20 Paris, Galerie Marcel Bernheim, Éva Gonzalès, 1932, no.20 or no.22 Milwaukee, Milwaukee Art Museum, Impressionism: Masterworks on Paper, 2011-2012; London, Royal Academy, Impressionists on Paper: Degas to Toulouse-Lautrec, 2023-2024, no.11.

Literature:

Octave Mirbeau, 'Notes sur l'art: Eva Gonzalès', La France, 17 January 1885, p.2; Robert Henard, 'Les Expositions', La Renaissance, 4 April 1914, p.25; Louis Hautecoeur, 'Exposition Eva Gonzalès (Galerie Bernheim jeune)', La Chronique des Arts et de la Curiosité, 11 April 1914, p.115; Louis Dimier, 'Chronique des arts', L'Action Francaise, 12 April 1914, p.4; François Monod, 'L'Impressionnisme féminin. Deux élèves de Manet: Berthe Morisot (1841-1895), Éva Gonzalès (1849-1883)', Art et Décoration, May 1914, p.3; Claude Roger-Marx, Eva Gonzalès, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1950, unpaginated (p.29); Marie-Caroline Sainsaulieu and Jacques de Mons, Eva Gonzalès 1849-1883: Etude critique et catalogue raisonné, Paris, 1990, pp.212-213, no.96 (as location unknown); Belinda Thomson, 'Eva Gonzalès 1849-1883: Etude critique et catalogue raisonné' [book review], The Burlington Magazine, September 1992, p.605; Carol Jane Grant, Eva Gonzalès (1849-1883): An examination of the artist's style and subject matter, unpublished Ph.D thesis, Ohio State University, 1994, p.296, illustrated p.495, pl.CLXVIII (as location unknown); Brigid Mangano, 'The Problem of the Woman Artist: How Eva Gonzales was "Seen" in Late Nineteenth-Century France', Through Gendered

Lenses: An Undergraduate Academic Journal of Gender Research & Scholarship, 2011, pp.37-38, fig.7; Christopher Lloyd, Impressionism: Pastels, Watercolors, Drawings, exhibition catalogue, Milwaukee, 2011, illustrated in colour p.106, pl.47; Christopher Lloyd et al, Impressionists on Paper: Degas to Toulouse-Lautrec, exhibition catalogue, London, 2023-2024, p.68, no.11.

Artist description:

Born into a cultivated Parisian family, Eva Gonzalès received her early artistic training in the studio of the portrait painter Charles Chaplin, from whom she learned the art of pastel. In 1869, at the age of twenty-two, she was taken on as a pupil by Edouard Manet. She was, in fact, to be his only student, and also posed for a number of paintings and drawings by Manet. Although her early work reveals the distinct influence of Manet, as her independent career progressed she developed a more personal, intimate style of painting. Gonzalès achieved her earliest success at the Salon of 1870, where she exhibited two paintings and a pastel; these earned approving notices from the influential critics Philippe Burty, Jules Castagnary, Zacharie Astruc and Edmond Duranty, and one of her paintings was purchased by the State. As one modern scholar has noted, 'Her talents, especially in pastel technique, attracted the attention of critics right from the start, and like [Berthe] Morisot, she was often compared with Rosalba Carriera.' Further critical success accompanied her works exhibited at the Salon of 1872. The following year, however, her submitted painting was rejected by the Salon jury and was instead exhibited at the Salon des Refusés, in the catalogue of which she described herself as a pupil of both Chaplin and Manet.

Producing mainly portraits, still life subjects and contemporary genre scenes, Eva Gonzalès continued to show her work at the annual Salons, albeit not every year, throughout her relatively brief career. However, although she was invited, like Manet she never took part in any of the seven Impressionist exhibitions. Nevertheless, she is generally considered to be a member of the Impressionist movement by virtue of her painting style. Her work continued to attract favourable comments from writers and critics, including Emile Zola and Jules Claretie; the latter noted in 1874 that she was 'an artist of rare talent, who takes the brush after having handled pastel like Rosalba.'

In January 1879 Gonzalès married the printmaker Henri Guérard, a friend and collaborator of Manet. Apart from being shown at the Salons, her work was also included in a handful of gallery exhibitions in Paris, notably at the Galerie Georges Petit in 1883. Gonzalès died of an embolism in May 1883 at the age of thirty-six, less than three weeks after the birth of her son Jean-Raymond, and six days after the death of her master Manet. In 1885 a large retrospective exhibition of her work, organized by her father and her husband, was held at the offices of the magazine La Vie Moderne in Paris. This was, in fact, her first solo exhibition, and included eighty-eight paintings and drawings.

Pastels make up a substantial portion of Eva Gonzalès's oeuvre, and indeed accounted for nearly a quarter of the works shown in the posthumous exhibition of 1885. The artist worked concurrently in oil and pastel throughout her career, and showed her first pastel at the Salon of 1870, eventually exhibiting a total of nine works in this medium at the Salons. As the French critic Octave Mirbeau wrote of Gonzalès's works in pastel, at the time of an exhibition of her work at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris in 1914, 'It is simplicity, it is sincerity, it is serenity. Absolutely no feminine over-sentimentality, nor a desire to simply make pretty or nice, and yet what an exquisite charm.' Eighteen years later, another critic praised Gonzalès's 'marvellous pastels, drawn in the manner of the worthy Chardin, with subtle daring, broken, delicate colours, which blend in sweet harmony...with a virile draughtsmanship.'