Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Maximilien Luce (Paris 1858 - Paris 1941)

Landscape with Trees

Oil on stamped Arches paper, laid down on canvas.
Signed Luce at the lower left.
Inscribed '108 M. Luce. / "Paysage" / yes / Luce' on a label attached to the stretcher.
273 x 370 mm. (10 3/4 x 14 5/8 in.)

This vibrant oil sketch may depict a view near the town of Méréville, about fifty kilometres south of Paris, where Luce spent several summers in the first few years of the 20th century. Located in the valley of the river Juine, the town is best known for the Chateau de Méréville, with its Romantic park and gardens constructed in the late 18th century.

A comparable landscape painted by Luce at Méréville in 1903 is in the collection of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Weimar, while a similar work, datable to c.1905 and also depicting the area around Méréville, is in a private collection in New York. A Paysage dans les environs de Méréville sold at auction in 1990 may also be compared stylistically to the present work, as can another Méréville landscape in a private collection.

Denise Bazetoux has confirmed the attribution of the present sheet. She has succinctly described Luce's landscape paintings of the first decade of the new century as 'free of the theoretical rigidity of neo-impressionism, but still imbued with the desire to construct the subject carefully, and capture the light.'

Provenance:

Galerie Schneider, Paris.

Artist description:

Born in the Parisian neighbourhood of Montparnasse, Maximilien Luce displayed a lifelong interest in the depiction of the daily life of the working-class city folk he grew up with. Trained initially as a wood-engraver, he took up landscape painting in the late 1870's. Although best known for his work as a Neo-Impressionist painter, Luce often preferred urban subjects to the landscape views produced by such colleagues as Camille Pissarro and Paul Signac. Like Signac and Henri-Edmond Cross, Luce continued to work in a Neo-Impressionist, or pointillist, manner for many years after the death of the

group’s leader Georges Seurat, in 1891. He exhibited with the Neo-Impressionist artists at the Salon des Indépendants, and also took part in the exhibitions organized by Les XX in Brussels in 1889 and 1892. His strong left-wing political convictions and hostility towards the authoritarianism of the Second Empire also found expression in much of his art, and particularly in his graphic work, which included illustrations for several anarchist and subversive broadsheets, including Le Père Peinard, Le Chambard and Le Temps Nouveau.

A member of the French anarchist movement, Luce was briefly imprisoned as a political activist in 1894. From about 1895 onwards, and partly under the influence of Camille Pissarro, Luce began to move away from the Neo-Impressionist manner. He painted a number of urban views, in particular scenes of Notre-Dame, as well as depictions of men at work, rural landscapes and a handful of splendid portraits of fellow artists. Luce continued to exhibit his work regularly, with a series of one-man exhibitions at such Parisian galleries as Durand-Ruel, Druet and Bernheim-Jeune. His work was also shown in Germany, Belgium and Switzerland.