

Jean Vanden EECKHOUDT (Brussels 1875 - Bourgeois-Rixensart 1946)

Interior

Pastel.
Signed and dated J.v.D. Eeckhoudt / 97 at the lower right.
520 x 350 mm. (21 1/2 x 13 3/4 in.)

ACQUIRED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Completed in 1897 at the country home of the Vanden Eeckhoudt family in Oudenburg in Western Flanders, this large, finished pastel is a rare early work by the artist, who seems to have produced relatively few works on paper during his career. The present sheet can be added to a small but distinctive group of four similar interior scenes in pastel, drawn in 1896 and 1897 either at Oudenburg or at Hoeilaert, south of Brussels, where Isidore Verheyen had a studio.

The earliest of these large pastels by Vanden Eeckhoudt is An Interior in Oudenburg, dated 1896, in a private collection in Brussels, while also in a private collection is an Interior with Cats, signed and dated the folliowing year. Also dating from 1897 is an Interior with Sabots, formerly in the collection of Octave Maus, the founder of La Libre Esthétique, and now in the Musée Communal d'Ixelles, and an Interior with a Stove, which once belonged to the Belgian critic, poet and journalist Camille Lemonnier and is today in the collection of the Maison Camille Lemonnier, the museum devoted to the writer in Brussels.

Provenance:

Private collection, Liège.

Literature:

Johanna Ruyts-van Rillaer, Jean Vanden Eeckhoudt 1875-1946, Tielt, 1990, p.154, no.97-7.

Artist description:

Jan Vanden Eeckhoudt (known to his friends as 'Vanden') was the grandson of the genre painter François Verheyden and nephew of the landscape and portrait painter Isidore Verheyden. It was in his uncle's studio that, as a youth, he met such artists as Constantin Meunier, Georges Lemmen and Théo van Rysselberghe, who was to become a close friend. Vanden Eeckhoudt's earliest known work, a still life of crysanthemums, was painted in 1889, when he was just fourteen years old. The following year, on the advice of Meunier, he entered the studio of the painter Ernest Blanc-Garin, where he befriended the young artist Henri Evenepoel. He exhibited his work for the first time in Ghent in 1892, aged seventeen, and the following year had his first solo exhibition at a gallery in Brussels. From 1895 onwards Vanden Eeckhoudt participated in the annual exhibitions of the avant-garde artistic society La Libre Esthétique in Brussels, and in later years also showed at the Salon de Bruxelles and Salon du Cercle Pour l'Art.

In 1904 Vanden Eeckhoudt first visited the South of France, which was to have a profound effect on his art. Until the 1920s he would divide his year between stays in the South of France, mainly in Menton and Roquebrune, in the winter months, and return trips to Brussels in the summer. He came to be known for his richly coloured Mediterranean landscapes, and developed a friendship with Henri Matisse. Vanden Eeckhoudt's early work in an Impressionist and Post-Impressionist manner was succeeded, around 1913, by a style more indebted to Fauvism, which in turn lasted until about 1920. However, much of his work of these years was lost in 1925 when, suffering from depression, he destroyed around six hundred of his early paintings, and left Brussels to settle permanently in Roquebrune, where he built a villa, named La Couala.

Despite living and working in France for over thirty years, Vanden Eeckhoudt only had one exhibition of his work in Paris, in 1922, and indeed only infrequently exhibited in Brussels. A somewhat morose character, he rarely socialized with other artists or visited exhibitions, and, although fond of music, almost never went to concerts or the theatre. In 1937 he returned to Belgium, having lost the sight in one eye due to cataracts. Although he was beginning to lose his vision in the other eye, he continued to paint portraits and still life subjects into his old age, sometimes exhibiting his work alongside that of his daughter, Julienne (known as 'Zoum') Walter, who was a gifted painter and pastellist. Within a few weeks of Vanden Eeckhoudt's death in 1946, a retrospective exhibition of his work was held at the Galerie Giroux in Brussels.