

André DEVAMBEZ (Paris 1867 - Paris 1944)

Sur l'herbe: A Group of Figures in a Landscape

Watercolour and gouache, with framing lines in black ink.

Signed *Andre Devambez.* at the lower left.

Titled *Sur l'herbe.* in a cartouche at the bottom of the image.

Inscribed *Louis XVI en 20* / J*ean Lanez* / *Dienville* on the verso.

Formerly dated and inscribed *14 avril 1920* / *connu* / *(original)* / *Lanez Mautars* / A*ndré Devambez cadeau de mariage ami de T. Mautars* on an old backing sheet.

385 x 260 mm. (15 1/8 x 10 1/4 in.) [image]

436 x 328 mm. (17 1/8 x 12 7/8 in.) [sheet]

Depicting a group of young women enjoying goblets of wine served by frolicking, hovering putti, the present sheet is typical of André Devambez's delightful and often enchanting compositions. It has been suggested that this drawing is a design for a menu for the famed Parisian restaurant Maxim's, for which the artist is known to have drawn an illustration - with the title 'Sur l'herbe' - for the cover of the wine list of Côtes du Rhône.

Reminiscent of the fêtes galantes of the 18th century, a genre made popular by Watteau, the

composition of this drawing is similar to that of a circular painting by Devambez, also entitled Sur l'herbe, exhibited at the Salon of 1900.

Exhibitions

Paris, Galerie Fabienne Fiacre, *André Devambez 1867-1944: La Part de notre enfance*, 2021.

Literature:

Paris, Galerie Fabienne Fiacre, *André Devambez 1867-1944: La Part de notre enfance*, exhibition catalogue, 2021, p.13 (where dated 1900).

Artist description:

A painter and illustrator of considerable talent, André Devambez was the son of the graveur-éditeur Édouard Devambez, and as a child was already displaying his imaginative abilities as an artist, making drawings of historical battle scenes and illustrating his own stories and plays. He studied at the Académie Julian in Paris from 1885, while also working as an assistant to his father. In 1889 Devambez began exhibiting at the Salon des Artistes Français, and the following year won the Prix de Rome with a painting of The Denial of Saint Peter, today in the collection of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He spent three years as a pensionnaire at the French Academy at the Villa Medici in Rome, between 1893 and 1896. Within a few years of his return to France Devambez had established a modest critical and commercial reputation, admired for the originality of his compositions, as well as for the charming and often whimsical subject matter of his paintings and drawings.

When the artist was in his thirties, he began to devote more time to illustration, contributing drawings to several newspapers and magazines, and designing menus, invitations, programmes and advertisements. Devambez was fascinated by aircraft, cars, transportation and crowds, frequently portraying bustling streets or squares. He used a classical style, strewn with wit and humour to depict the world around him; an aesthetic that was very popular with publications, where his work often created an ideal marriage between text and image. Among the books he illustrated was Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels and Emile Zola's La Fête à Coqueville, while his drawings appeared in such magazines as Le Figaro illustré, Le Rire and L'Illustration. In 1910 Devambez received a commission from the French foreign ministry for decorative panels for the French embassy in Vienna, which were never installed and indeed seem have never been exhibited, and the following year was made a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur.

Seriously wounded during the First World War, in which he served as a volunteer at the age of forty-eight, Devambez spent the 1920s working for the journals Paris Le Soir and Les Humoristes and began teaching at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1927. He was elected to the Institut de France in 1927, travelled to Italy in 1930 and 1931 and visited London in 1936. An abiding intertest in aviation led to his appointment as painter to the French Air Ministry in 1934, while in 1937 he served on the jury of the Salon de la Société des Artistes Français. He died of cancer in 1944, at the age of seventy-six, and the following year a retrospective exhibition of nearly 250 works was held at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where he had taught until 1936. In 1987 almost the entire remaining contents of Devambez's studio – some sixty-two paintings, forty-seven drawings and around one hundred prints - were presented to the Musée départemental de l'Oise in Beauvais by his daughter Valentine Bousquet. Other works by André Devambez are in the collections of the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée du Petit Palais, as well as the museums of Amiens, Dijon, Quimper, Reims, Rouen, Saint-Quentin and Versailles, the La Salle College Art Gallery in Philadelphia, and elsewhere.