

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Henri PRIVAT-LIVEMONT (Schaerbeek 1861 - Schaerbeek 1936)

Landscape with Trees

Pastel, over traces of a pencil underdrawing, on canvas.

Signed Privat Livemont at the lower right.

812 x 1162 mm. (32 x 45 3/4 in.)

While not generally known as a landscape artist, Henri Privat-Livemont often depicted elegant women, sometimes accompanied by children, in field and forest settings. He was particularly fond of painting in the Sonian (Soignes) Wood, an 11,000 acre forest on the southeastern edge of Brussels. As the art critic Charles Conrardy, writing on the occasion of a retrospective exhibition of Privat-Livemont's work in a gallery in Brussels in 1919, noted, 'His love of nature is easily demonstrated by his many paintings of the Forêt de Soignes. Whatever the season, he set up his easel under the beech groves, beside the ponds and in front of the rhododendron beds. With a light brush, he knows how to render the foliage gilded by autumn, trembling in the east wind; all in sylvan bloom in summer or awakening in the chosen spring.'

Artist description:

One of the leading artists of the Belle Epoque in France and Belgium, Henri Privat Antoine Livemont, known as Privat-Livemont, studied at the School of Decorative Arts in Sint-Josse-ten-Noode before earning a scholarship to complete his training in Paris, where he lived and worked for six years, between 1883 and 1889. He initially won a commission to work on part of the decoration of the Hôtel de Ville, but soon fell foul of a new law that prohibited non-French artists from working on official civic projects. Nevertheless, he worked in the studio of the scenographer Jean-Baptiste Lavastre, where he created stage designs for a production of Hamlet at the Théâtre Français, where he also worked on the interior decoration of the theatre. On his return to Belgium in 1889 he settled in Schaerbeek, in the northern part of Brussels. He received several important commissions, notably the decoration of the provincial government building in the city of Hasselt. Privat-Livemont worked with several architects and designed the interiors of a number of private homes in Brussels, as well as painting murals for a theatre in Ostend.

Privat-Livemont's career as a painter, decorator, lithographer and commercial and magazine illustrator was a very successful one. (The artist's letterhead noted that he was a purveyor of 'Art posters and prints. Decorations for apartments. Traditional and modern styles. Sgraffiti'.) He became especially known as a designer of Art Nouveau posters, which he began producing in 1890, when he produced a striking poster for an exhibition in Schaerbeek, and this soon led to other commissions for posters, notably for the Cercle Artistique de Schaerbeek. By 1900 Privat-Livemont had designed some thirty

posters, many published by the artist himself, and had also taken up lithography and printmaking. Among his best-known posters are those for the Casino de Cabourg and such products as Absinthe Robette or Van Houten cocoa, as well as for the Brussels International Exposition of 1897. Privat-Livemont's poster designs were almost always based on striking images of beautiful dreamlike women, displaying a product for sale or engaged in some activity, often accompanied by floral motifs in their elegant borders. As the contemporary Belgian art critic Octave Maus, writing in 1900, noted, 'it was easy to discover certain analogies between the posters of Privat Livemont and those of [Alphonse] Mucha...Perhaps the enquiry, far from hurting M. Privat Livemont, would be in favour of the Brussels artist whose first posters go back to 1890, that is to say, to a period when the name of Mucha was unknown.' In his later years Privat-Livemont taught at the Académie in his native municipality of Schaerbeek.