

Jean-Gabriel Domergue (1889-1962) - Elegant Lady in white dress



Oil on isorel panel, signed lower left

Dimensions : H. 73 x W.60 cm (with frame : H. 96 x W. 83 cm)

Jean-Gabriel Domergue was born on 4 March 1889 in Bordeaux. His father, a journalist and art critic, took him to artists' studios from an early age. Very precocious, he drew remarkably well at the age of 15. He naturally entered the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and attended the studios of the best academic painters, such as Lefèvre, Robert-Fleury, Humbert and Flameng.

In 1906, at only seventeen years old, he participated in the Salon des Artistes Français where he received his first mention. In 1913, the artist was awarded the Second Grand Prix de Rome. 1920 was a decisive year for Domergue as he was awarded the Gold Medal at the Salon des Artistes Français: this marked the beginning of an immense success for him.

He was very quickly solicited by the advertising industry to create posters and catalogue covers. He also created theatre sets and illustrated several books. Domergue was the painter of the female portrait par excellence, from the 1920s to the 1950s. The artist succeeded brilliantly in putting his traditional training at the service of his own style, his originality and his joie de vivre. He is undeniably an essential milestone in the evolution of female portraiture in France. Domergue was also a worldly painter; his parents were members of the Bordeaux bourgeoisie. He frequented the French and British aristocracy and owned a villa in Cannes. Thanks to his origins and success, he spent his entire life rubbing shoulders with the greatest personalities, and painted portraits of the most beautiful women. Very influential, he played a major role in the evolution of fashion in his time. He designed numerous dresses, hats and accessories for the most famous couturiers, including Paul Poiret and Henry Marque.

Domergue produced a very large number of paintings. He loved women and money, and he accepted countless orders, the quality of which he sometimes neglected; there are many small formats, often repetitive and with little attention to detail. Finally, Domergue's type of painting gives the subject matter a crucial importance; even if all tastes are in nature, the elegance and beauty of the women can make the prices vary significantly.

Our painting is one of Domergue's important and sought-after works. The format is large, and the subject superb. While many of the artist's portraits are painted with an empty background, this one has a red background, representing a large theatre. The posture of the woman gives her great distinction; she is a very beautiful woman with an intelligent look. The hairstyle and the jewelry are well done. Finally, it should be noted that gloves are of fundamental importance in Domergue's work. Here they extend the grace of the arms and match the dress, creating a powerful contrast with the background.

Museums:

Cannes, Villa Domergue

Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne de la ville

Bordeaux, Musée des Beaux-Arts

Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts

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