

LA TREILLE A LEVENS, CIRCA 1889

Oil on canvas, signed at the bottom

18,1 x 23,3 inches

Est. 60 000/80 000 €

(Sale Friday May 21st 2021 at ADER, Hôtel DROUOT)

Henri-Edmond CROSS is one of the fathers of modernity. He was an anarchist and devoted himself to a true cult of colour.

He grew up in **Lille** before coming to **Paris** to finally settle permanently in the **Var**.

In **1856**, he was born **DELACROIX** and not related to **Eugène (1798–1863)**.

His mother was English and he chose to sign his works with his translated surname, **Henri CROSS**, to distinguish himself from the great romantic painter.

He later realised that a sculptor, who was also a painter, was called **Henry CROS (1840–1907)** and, for the second time, changed his pseudonym. He then deliberately and definitively adopted **Henri-Edmond CROSS (1856–1910)**.

His **anarchist ideals** dictated that he should paint independently, far from any commercial inclinations.

His concept of anarchy is one of an authentic life in harmony with nature where beings are equal without any social hierarchy and where men are free: a primitive purity, far from the city, far from everything that is complicated on the artistic scene.

He does not live from his work. He produces little as Neo-Impressionism is a slow technique.

The finest collection of this artist resides in the **Musée d'Orsay and comprises only seven paintings**.

He was the friend of painters such as **Henri MATISSE (1869–1954)** and **Henri MANGUIN (1874–1949)**. They had in common not only their first names but also the will to paint happiness in the South of France.

CROSS is a great reader of **Friedrich NIETZSCHE (1844–1900)** and of **André GIDE (1869–1951)** which he knows personally and is sensitive to his poetry and literature.

He is known as a very talented painter who was considered at the dawn of the 20th century as the equal of **Paul SIGNAC (1863–1935)**. He has held the attention of the most modern young painters and had immense influence on them.

Moreover, around 1895, **Count KESSLER (1868–1937)**, an art collector and German pacifist activist, became his patron. It was also through the Count's collection that CROSS influenced the young generation of **expressionists** from **Germany and École de Paris**.

LA TREILLE A LEVENS, 1889 :

Chromaticism and geometry at the gateway of symbolism and abstraction

Everything is in the making in our painting, dating 1889, for the definitive adoption by CROSS, four years later, of the Divisionism theorised by his friend **Georges SEURAT (1859–1891.)**

It is a crucial piece in the understanding of the artist's work in particular as well as for **Neo-Impressionism** in general.

Cross works with light everywhere he goes, here in Levens in Provence. Nothing is accidental. The light created by the sunlight through the trellis vibrates intensely. The crimson pink of the luminous strokes is in tonal harmony with his deep greens.

To the chromatic laws of Neo-Impressionism are added the geometric principles of **Divisionism**.

His compositions are governed by parallels and right angles through the decomposition of tones and the dosage of colours.

Geometry dominates—horizontally in the beams of the trellis, the table and benches, vertically in the legs of the trellis and those of the garden furniture, obliquely in the intersections of the abundant vines with the structure.

The serpentine shape of the vines evokes dancing bodies or *contrapposto* by the author's subtle will of harmony.

Georges SEURAT cited that *art is harmony ... harmony is the analogy of opposites, the analogy of similarities, of tone, of hues, of lines, considered by the dominant and under the influence of lighting in cheerful, calm combinations.*

Yves JAEGLE, an art critic, stated that *this great painter accumulates the paradox and the better we know him, the more we admire him. He found that Cross painted what he saw and he saw very well: the world is an infinity of luminous points. He painted quiet happiness. Matisse loved him infinitely.*

Documentation:

- Frank, Frédéric et Marina Ferretti Bocquillon, editors. **Peindre le bonheur**, Prestal Verlag Ed., 2018.
- Lemoine S. et al., editors. **Le néo-impresionnisme de Seurat à Paul Klee**, RMN Ed., 2005.
- Dagen, Phillipe et Françoise Hamon, editors. **Époque contemporaine XIX-XXème siècles**, Histoire de l'art Flammarion Collection, Flammarion Ed., 1995.

(Translated from French by Anne CREVIER)