

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM

FINE ARTS

ERNEST-ANGE DUEZ

Paris 1843 – Bougival 1896

French School

PORTRAIT OF AN ELEGANT YOUNG LADY

Oil on panel

H. 0,24 m; W. 0,19 m

Signed and dated lower left: *E. DUEZ. 1881*

DATE: 1881

PROVENANCE:

Private collection, France

Duez, who was a great admirer of Edouard Manet, was also a painter of modernity. His works, which are quite rare, are similar to those of Henri Gervex, Jules Bastien-Lepage and Alfred Stevens. At the age of 27, he entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, first under the realist painter Isidore Pils, before moving on to the portrait painter Carolus-Duran's studio. There, he met the American artists James Whistler and John Singer Sargent, who would portray him in 1885 (Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey). Their studios were close to each other on the Boulevard Berthier in Paris, and they were members of the same circle of friends that included the musician Gabriel Fauré, the writers Zola and Maupassant and the painter Roger Jourdain.

From 1868, Duez exhibited regularly at the Salon where he started with religious compositions. Duez first met major success at the 1874 Salon with his realist allegory *Splendour and Misery of a Courtesan*¹ and he won a third class medal. His triptych depicting the obscure life of St. Cuthbert (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) which he exhibited at the Salon of 1879, was rewarded with a first class medal. This recognition opened up the path to public commissions for him. In this way, he created decorative panels for the Opéra and participated in the decoration of the Sorbonne (*Virgil Inspired in the Woods*, 1888) for the Hotel de Ville (*Botany and Physics*, overdoors for the Sciences Room, 1892) and for the Assistance Publique (*Feeding Time at the Maternity Hospital*, 1895).

From 1877, Duez spent his summers at Villerville, a village on the Normandy coast near Trouville, where he painted beach scenes *in situ* that were greatly appreciated at the time. While retaining a precise technique and a descriptive manner, he moved towards a more luminous and impressionist type of painting. Although the seascapes of Villerville served essentially as a

¹ It is a diptych. The version of *Splendour* shown at the 1874 Salon is now in the Musée des Arts décoratifs and a repetition of the painting is at the Musée Carnavalet, Paris. *Splendour* was etched by Duez in 1878. It is not known what happened to its pendant *Misery*.

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pretext for genre scenes showing fashionable society, Duez was not insensitive to the world of fishing and he also depicted the toughness of the profession of fishwives. At the 1886 Salon, he exhibited *Old Fishwife* (Melun, Musée Municipal) which reveals his gift as an observer and his understanding of his sitter's psychology. Duez also made genre scenes, which were often original and striking, such as *At the Restaurant Le Doyen* (1878) the composition of which is surprising for its audacity (see illustration).

During the 1880s, Duez concentrated more on portraits and began a series showing the painters of his time in their working clothes. In this way he exhibited at the Salon of 1881 the *Portrait of the painter Ulysse Butin* (Paris, musée d'Orsay) and the *Portrait of Alphonse de Neuville* (Versailles, châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon).

Duez was also a printmaker and illustrator of books. In 1889, he produced illustrations for Emile Zola's *La Terre* and in 1892, he illustrated Victor Hugo's *Travailleurs de la mer*. A talented artist capable of working in all genres, Duez finally made landscape his favourite subject area and was most successful in his marine landscapes populated by elegant Parisian ladies.

In 1890, he was one of the founders of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts with Puvis de Chavannes, Rodin and Meissonier. Duez died suddenly of a brain haemorrhage on 4 April 1896 during a bicycle ride in the forest of Saint-Germain-en-Laye with his friend Roger Jourdain.



Ernest Ange Duez, *At the Restaurant Le Doyen*, oil on canvas, H. 0,90 m; W. 1,16 m, Sotheby's New York, 28 April 2010, lot 120.