

# Sotheby's

## Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale

London | 01 Mar 2017, 07:00 PM | L17002



### LOT 18

PROPERTY OF A EUROPEAN PRIVATE COLLECTOR

### ALFRED SISLEY

1839 - 1899

EFFET DE NEIGE À LOUVECIENNES

signed Sisley and dated 74 (lower left)

oil on canvas

54 by 65cm.

21 1/4 by 25 5/8 in.

Painted in 1874.

**ESTIMATE** €6,000,000-8,000,000 GBP

Lot Sold: 7,358,750 GBP

This work will be included in the new edition of the Catalogue raisonné of Alfred Sisley by François Daulte now being prepared at Galerie Brame & Lorenceau by the Comité Alfred Sisley.

### PROVENANCE

François Depeaux, Rouen (sold: Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, Collection de F. Depeaux, 31st May 1906, lot 59)

Edmond Décap, Paris (purchased at the above sale)

Maurice Barret-Décap, Biarritz (by descent from the above. Sold: Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 12th December 1929, lot 13)

Henri Canonne, Paris (purchased at the above sale)

Private Collection, Geneva

Sale: Christie's, New York, 7th November 1995, lot 13

Purchased at the above sale by the present owner

## EXHIBITED

Washington, D.C., The Phillips Collection; San Francisco, Center for the Arts at Yerba Buena Gardens, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco & New York, The Brooklyn Museum of Art, *Impressionists in Winter: Effets de neige*, 1998-99, no. 50, illustrated in colour in the catalogue

Treviso, Casa dei Carraresi & Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, *La nascita dell'Impressionismo*, 2000-02, no. 137, illustrated in colour in the catalogue (titled *Effetto di neve ad Argenteuil*)

Ferrara, Palazzo dei Diamanti; Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza & Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Alfred Sisley. *Poeta dell'impressionismo / Poète de L'Impressionnisme*, 2002-03, no. 17 (in Ferrara); no. 18 (in Madrid); no. 20 (in Lyon), illustrated in colour in the catalogue

Turin, Palazzina della Promotrice delle Belle Arti, *Gli Impressionisti e la neve*, 2004-05, no. 116, illustrated in colour in the catalogue

Brescia, Museo di Santa Giulia, *Turner e gli Impressionisti*, 2006-07, no. 140, illustrated in colour in the catalogue

Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, *Sombras / Shadows*, 2009, no. 56, illustrated in colour in the catalogue

## LITERATURE

Arsène Alexandre, 'La Collection Canonne', in *La Renaissance*, Paris, April 1930, mentioned p. 88

Arsène Alexandre, *La Collection Canonne*, Paris, 1930, illustrated in colour after p. 52 (titled *Neige aux environs de Paris*)

François Daulte, Alfred Sisley. *Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint*, Lausanne, 1959, no. 147, illustrated (titled *Effet de neige à Argenteuil*)

Marc-Henri Tellier, François Depeaux (1853-1920): *Le Charbonnier et les Impressionnistes*, Rouen, 2010, no. 453, illustrated in colour p. 207 (titled *Effet de neige à Argenteuil*)

Alfred Sisley: *Impressionist Master* (exhibition catalogue), Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut, 2017, illustrated in colour

## CATALOGUE NOTE

One of the most sublime winter landscapes in Sisley's œuvre, the present work was created at the height of the Impressionist movement, and it beautifully reflects Sisley's, and indeed the Impressionist painters', fascination with the depiction of the unique quality of light found in snow-covered settings. After the Prussian siege of Paris in 1871, Sisley decided to move with his family to the village of Louveciennes, situated on the river Seine, about thirty kilometres west of the capital, and in the winter of 1874 they moved to the neighbouring Marly-le-Roy. During his time there, Sisley painted a number of scenes of the village and its winding streets. He was particularly fascinated by the beauty of the Seine valley, and took delight in painting this new environment, trying to capture the effects of season, weather and time of day on the countryside, and experimenting with the effects of light and colour. The unique properties of light on a clear winter day, reflected off the particles of encrusted snow, presented temporal and tonal challenges that appealed to Sisley's most profound sensibilities as a landscape painter.

While the present composition was previously believed to depict the landscape at Argenteuil, Richard Shone has identified the location depicted here as a path to the side of the Route de la Princesse in Louveciennes, not far from Sisley's home (L. Portnoy Stein in *Impressionists in Winter: Effets de neige* (exhibition catalogue), op. cit., p. 174). Writing about Sisley's paintings executed in this region, Vivienne Couldrey observed: 'In the area of Louveciennes along the valley of the Seine he found waiting for him the kind of landscape he was to love all his life. Westward from Paris the Seine winds in large loops through Suresnes, Villeneuve-la-Garenne, Argenteuil, Bougival, Sèvres, Ville d'Avray, Louveciennes, Noisy-le-Roi, Port-Marly; the villages are strung along the river, clustered around Versailles. It is an area rich in historical associations. The Sun King, Louis XIV, chose to make Marly a haven of rural peace and repose to escape from the intrigues and power struggles of Versailles, but he imposed on its simple life the formal landscaping and monumental magnificence of his era' (V. Couldrey, *Alfred Sisley, The English Impressionist*, Exeter, 1992, p. 33).

Frances Fowle wrote about the present work: 'This is one of Sisley's most effective snowscenes, conveying the crisp atmosphere and sharp contrasts of light and shade on a sunny winter's day. [...] The snowscenes of Louveciennes and Marly that Sisley produced during the 1870s reflect a continuing fascination with the transformation that the landscape undergoes during the winter months. [...] At Marly Sisley often painted from the comfort of an upstairs room, but in this picture he has clearly placed his easel en plein-air. The paint is applied with sharp, stabbing brushstrokes. Streaks of pale yellow and blue animate the sunlit areas of snow, while cooler greys, greens and lilacs create the deep wedge of shadow that dominates the foreground. Three figures dressed in the same pale blue and lilac hues recede into the distance along a diagonal path, but our attention is drawn to the figure in the woollen bobble hat, who is brought to life with the minimum of strokes. Hands thrust deeply into pockets, cheeks aglow, he stumps through the snow along the sunlit path. The light captures the gable end of a distant house and the tips of the wicket fence, enclosing a market garden on the left; but the major part of the composition is given over to the intensely blue sky and the broad expanse of snow. Bold touches of black pepper its uneven surface, indicating a temporary thaw before evening brings a heavy frost' (F. Fowle in *Alfred Sisley. Poeta del Impressionismo* (exhibition catalogue), op. cit., p. 416).

*Effect de neige à Louveciennes* featured in two exhibitions in the early 1930s. Hidden away in private collections, it was not again seen in public until the 1990s, when it was included in the seminal exhibition *Impressionists in Winter: Effets de neige* that toured in Washington, D.C., San Francisco and New York in 1998-99. Writing about the present work in the exhibition catalogue, Lisa Portnoy Stein comments on its composition: 'Snow Effect at Louveciennes is a clearly structured work, based on a layering of diagonals, each of which ultimately leads to the solitary house in the center background. First, Sisley dramatically divided the composition in two, again on a diagonal, separating right from left with an imposing triangular shadow of bluish lavender in the foreground. Within each half of the painting a further division occurs, creating a total of four distinct diagonal areas: the road and fenced-in field to the far left, the looming shadow, the snow-covered hill on a gentle slope to the right of center, and a dark patch of trees anchoring the right side of the painting.' (L. Portnoy Stein in *Impressionists in Winter: Effets de neige* (exhibition catalogue), op. cit., p. 174).

Pissarro, who lived in Louveciennes until 1872, also took inspiration from the surrounding countryside and the river Seine, painting many of the same views as Sisley during various seasons and in different weather conditions, including several winter landscapes. Both artists used shadows to a dramatic effect, contrasting the icy white and pink tones of the snow with the deeper blue and purple tones for the shadows. Discussing the present composition, Lisa Portnoy Stein notes: 'The vast triangular shadow, cast by a steep embankment, suggests the sun's position to be to the left of the painting and somewhat behind the painter, whose easel must have been placed within the shade. Like Pissarro, who tended to denote a structure outside of the frame by the motif of its shadow [fig. 1], Sisley employed this motif to create the structure of the composition' (ibid., p. 174).

The first recorded owner of the present work was the Rouen-based industrialist and collector François Depeaux (1853-1920). Between 1880 and his death forty years later Depeaux amassed an impressive collection of nearly 600 works, mainly by Impressionist and post-Impressionist artists. He donated a number of paintings from his collection to

the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen. Parts of his collection were sold at two auctions, held in Paris in 1901 and 1906. The latter auction contained 46 works by Sisley, including the present painting, as well as several important works by Monet. *Effet de neige à Louveciennes* was purchased in this sale by Depeaux's brother-in-law Edmond Décap, one of the major early merchants and collectors of Impressionist art. The work remained in Décap's family until 1929, when it was acquired at auction by the Parisian pharmacist and industrialist Henri Canonne (1867-1961). Canonne became an avid purchaser of Impressionist, Neo and Post-Impressionist and Nabis paintings in the 1920s, mainly through the Paris-based Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, forming an impressive collection of works by Monet, Renoir, Sisley, Cézanne, Signac and Bonnard. Most recently, the present work has been in a private European collection for over twenty years.

This work has been requested for the exhibition *Sisley l'Impressionniste* to be held at Hôtel de Caumont Centre d'Art in Aix-en-Provence from June to October 2017.



Fig. 1

Alfred Sisley, *Jardin à Louveciennes, effet ne neige*, 1874, oil on canvas, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.



Fig. 2

Alfred Sisley, *La neige à Louveciennes*, 1878, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Fig. 3

Camille Pissarro, *Chemin des Creux, Louveciennes, neige*, 1872, oil on canvas, Museum Folkwang, Essen



Fig. 4

Claude Monet, *La Route de Vétheuil, effet de neige*, 1879, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida