

Sotheby's

Impressionist & Modern Art Day Sale

London | 22 Jun 2017, 10:30 AM | L17008



LOT 318

PROPERTY FROM A PRIVATE ENGLISH COLLECTION

GUSTAVE LOISEAU

1865 - 1935

RIVES DE L'EURE EN ÉTÉ

signed G. Loiseau (lower right)

oil on canvas

65 by 81.7cm., 25 5/8 by 32 1/8 in.

Painted in 1899.

ESTIMATE 250,000-350,000 GBP

Lot Sold: 500,750 GBP

This work will be included in the forthcoming Catalogue raisonné of the Works of Gustave Loiseau being prepared by Didier Imbert.

PROVENANCE

Galerie Durand-Ruel, Paris (acquired directly from the artist in 1899)

M. Monsieur François Depeaux, Rouen (acquired from the above in 1901)

Galerie Durand Ruel, Paris (acquired from the above in 1906)

X.M. Breteau Antony, France (acquired from the above in 1945)
Galerie Durand-Ruel, Paris (acquired from the above in 1946)
Arthur Tooth & Sons, London (acquired in 1964)
Private Collection, London (acquired from the above circa 1965)
Thence by descent to the present owner

EXHIBITED

Paris, Galerie Durand-Ruel, Gustave Loiseau, 1963, no. 4
London, Arthur Tooth & Sons, *The Rim of Impressionism*, 1965, no. 16

CATALOGUE NOTE

Painted in 1899, Gustave Loiseau's *Rives de l'Eure en été* depicts a magnificent row of poplar trees standing on the edge of the river Eure in Normandy. This enchanting and wonderfully evocative composition is imbued with the soft rose light of a late summer's afternoon as a gentle breeze rustles the uppermost leaves of the trees. The extraordinarily rich surface, composed using vigorous brushwork and areas of dappling paint, exemplifies the technical virtuosity Loiseau had achieved by the end of the decade.

An inherent part of the landscape of northern France, avenues of poplar trees are the most identifiable recurring motif in Loiseau's work from the 1890s. Loiseau shared a dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel, with Claude Monet at this time in his career and the younger artist was no doubt aware of the importance of the poplar tree as a subject in the master Impressionist's paintings of the 1880s and 1890s. As they had in Monet's depictions, the poplar trees were taken as a singular device upon which Loiseau could render the vicissitudes of temporal conditions and experiment with artistic notions. A devotee to painting en plein air, Loiseau would watch with a hunter's concentration for the precise moment when light shimmered on grass or on the silvery underside of leaves or on the surface of water. In the present work, the brilliant acuity of the artist's observations of light and shade drawn directly from nature is matched only by the sublime harmony of his palette and brushwork. Loiseau has relinquished any idea of local incident or focal point so that the trees present a frieze that the eye can study back and forth, as if exploring a fluttering wall of leaves, sky and sunlight.

Underlying the beauty of *Rives de l'Eure en été* is a subject with special significance for the citizens of France. During the French Revolution the poplar had been selected as the tree of liberty. Paul Tucker tells us that 'the reasons for this choice remain obscure, but it was most likely due to the derivation of the name from the Latin *populus*, which means both "people" and "popular." Whatever the rationale, by 1793, 60,000 poplars had been planted in France and hundreds of broadsides had been issued with the tree as a symbol of the new republic' (Paul Tucker, *Monet in the 90s, The Series Paintings*, Boston, 1989, p. 138). The poplar continued as an important political symbol during the nineteenth century, and in 1889, at the time of the hundred-year anniversary of the Revolution, there were again ceremonial plantings of poplars throughout the country.

In *Rives de l'Eure en été*, Loiseau has immortalised the most ephemeral and exquisite qualities of light to produce a painting of magical lightness and an intrinsic poetic quality that far surpasses the straight depiction of nature. Owned by Durand-Ruel at several junctures in its history, this painting has remained in the same family since it was last publicly exhibited in 1965.