

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

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LÉON SPILLIAERT

1881 Ostend - Brussels 1946

*Landscape with a Grange, Trees and a Wall*

Pen, brush and black ink, coloured crayons.

Signed with initials and dated with pen and black ink in the lower right margin: *L. S. 1917*; signed and dated with pencil in the lower left margin: *L. Spilliaert 1917*.

501 x 503 mm

PROVENANCE: Guillaume Campo Gallery, Antwerp – Private collection

In December 1916 Spilliaert married the girl Rachel Vergison, 12 years younger and according to his own words he enjoyed very much her youth and freshness. Due to the difficult life condition in Ostend, a harbour city under siege, he planned to leave Belgium, wanting to go to Switzerland to reunite with a group of Pacifists thinkers around Roman Rolland, with whom he was acquainted through Emile Verhaeren, the great Belgian poet. In March 1917 he left Ostend, stayed a while in the suburb of Brussels trying to find money to pursue his trip abroad. But the collectors who owned him money could not pay him, he did not want to leave his production of drawings behind and more his young wife was pregnant. So he decided to stay in Sint Agatha Berchem and got in contact with some of his old friends in Brussels.

He loved walking and the countryside around Brussels and in particularly one spot was a favourite place to go: the *Karreveld*, an old farm surrounded by old buildings. Our drawing is perhaps an image of a house with an old wall which was the trigger for a composition. From the same subject Anne Adriaens-Pannier has also catalogued a watercolour, which is a different version, also dated 1917. With the help of the architect Leon Sneyers, Spilliaert got the possibility to make a name for himself in Brussels. With Sneyers as an editor he produced a series of original lithographs and had a first solo-exhibition in Sneyers decoration shop *L'Interieur* in April 1917. From that period the palette of colours he started using were very colourful and he produced original watercolours full of fantasy.

Spilliaert had acquaintances with the artistic movements of his time, confronting himself to the contemporary painters as well as writers. He was the precursor of a geometrical abstraction, a constructed and colourful Expressionism, Surrealism mixed up with images and at the same time he redefined a vision of the space inspired by Japanese engravings.

A comparable drawing, also executed in 1917, depicting a tree and greenhouses at Hoeilaert is in the collection of Alessandro Casana in Milan<sup>1</sup>. Three other compositions, all landscapes with silhouettes of trees, are in private collections and in the Belgian senate, *Paleis der Natie*, Brussels<sup>2</sup>.

This drawing will be included into the catalogue raisonné of Spilliaert's works, prepared by Anne Adriaens-Pannier.

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<sup>1</sup> Exhib. cat., *Léon Spilliaert 1881-1946*. Paris, Galeries Nationales du Grand-Palais, 1981, and Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1982, p. 170, no.76, ill.

<sup>2</sup> Francine-Claire Legrand, *Léon Spilliaert in zijn tijd*, Tiel 1981, p. 209, nos. 165,166, and 167, ill.