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EST. 1817

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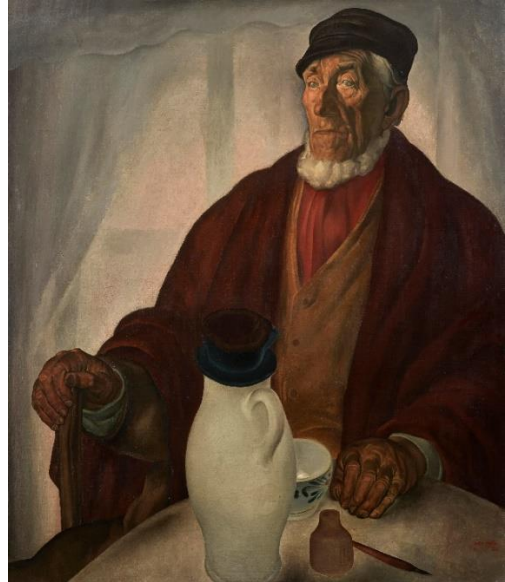
Anto Carte (Mons 1886-1954 Ixelles)

The Burgomaster

Signed and dated (lower right): 'Anto Carte 1926'

Oil on unlined canvas

39 ¼ x 33 ½ in. (99.5 x 85 cm.)



Provenance

Madame Goldschmidt-Brodsky

Exhibited

Étiquettes d'exposition, Venice, 1928

Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, 1959

Anto-Carte, or Antoine Carte, a prominent Belgian artist of the early 20th century, is best known for portraying scenes of everyday life which depict the marginalised members of his society, laborers, miners, peasants, harlequins, sailors, fisherman, acrobats and the infirmed. The human figure was central to his work and his art became a philosophical reflection on human destiny.

In his signature style of Realism, he incorporated a type of spirituality and introspection that is similar to the work of the Italian primitives, and French symbolists such as Puvis de Chavannes and Maurice Denis. Striving for a new, united form of Belgian art, he collaborated with Flemish Belgians, Valerius de Saedeleer and Gustaaf van de Woestijne, in the exhibition *Les Imagiers Belges* (1923), and founded the Wallonian artist group *Nervia* (1928) with Louis Buisseret, Frans Depooter, Léon Devos, and Léon Navez, amongst others.

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His compositions often featured particularly innovative perspective and points of view, painted with a monumental austerity. This is well demonstrated in the present work *The Burgomaster*, where the stylized still life elements in the foreground are painted from a high viewpoint, in contrast with the figure in the background which is painted from a lower viewpoint. These sculptural forms are beautifully silhouetted against the soft diffused light which streams in from the window behind, and throws the spectator into an introspective meditation, much like the sitter himself. His early art studies at the Mons art academy and the Brussels academy, under the supervision of Jean Delville and Constant Montald, had given Carte a strong basis in the decorative arts. Influenced by fresco painting and glass media, Carte restricted his palette to a limited number of colours, which further accentuated the austerity of his compositions, as seen in works such *Le Pain* (Fig.1)

In 1920 at the Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia, he showed one of his masterpieces, the *La Pietà* of 1918 (Fig. 2). Here Carte fuses influences from the medieval Pieta, to the monumental figures of Pieter Bruegel, with his characteristic, intimate stillness. He often painted biblical scenes whose protagonists were farmers, sailors or workers and here, seated on a simple bed, an old mother holds her deceased son in her lap, his miner's tools lying on the floor; the universal theme of mother and child, both religious and secular, portrayed in this emotive scene.

During an exhibition in Paris in 1923 he met representatives of the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, USA. These contacts led to his first major retrospective in 1925 which was well received, and he went on to have lasting success with American collectors and institutions. There is another painting of *The Burgomaster* in the Cleveland Museum of Art, USA.

Our painting has a distinguished provenance, having been in the collection of Alfred Goldschmidt, and his wife Guetia Brodsky. Alfred was the brother of Bénédict Goldschmidt, also an important collector, who donated a great part of his collection to the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels. The Goldschmidt family was very active in the cultural scene in Brussels and great supporters and collectors of Belgian artists of their time.

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Fig.1: Anto Carte, *Le Pain*, 1921, Private Collection



Fig. 2: Anto Carte, *La Pietà*, 1918, Collection du muse des Beaux-Arts (BAM).

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Fig. 3: Antoon van der Straet, *The Burgomaster*, 1924, Cleveland Museum of Art