

Achille Laugé

1861 Arzens –1944 Cailhau

Portrait of a young woman

Oil on canvas, ca. 1893-95

Signed upper right A. Laugé

Canvas 15 9/16 x 12 5/8 in. (39.5 x 32 cm)

Provenance Private collection, France

Condition In very good condition, no retouching and on its original canvas

This beautiful portrait by Achille Laugé illustrates the artist's young years and his evolution towards pointillism. In 1882, the artist left for Paris to study at the Beaux-Arts, but in 1888, he returned back home, at Carcassonne, where he stayed his whole life. Achille Laugé was a solitary artist. He marked little interest in academic education and disregarded any official career. He was negatively criticized at the Salon des Indépendants in 1894 and refused at the Salon de la Nationale in 1900, as well as at the Salon d'Automne in 1908. He painted as an outsider of the artistic circles. Today, one does not even know for sure if indeed Laugé met Georges Seurat and the pointillists or knew them only through their works, though stylistic relationships suggest that he actually did.

As soon as 1890, Laugé indeed painted in a very personal divisionism style, landscapes, still-lives and portraits. Having started painting with broad and little structured strokes, Laugé became after 1892 more and more meticulous to finally adopt a strict pointillism. This portrait is one of the rare examples of Laugé's work at the early stage of his neo-impressionist oeuvre, ca. 1893-95, and certainly one of the nicest ones. This way of placing the pointillism on the face and leaving the background in a single colour and with a different type of brush and hatching is typical of Laugé's work from 1893 onwards. This creates a very strong contrast. The touches of face and hair are woven together with great mastery, reflecting the reflections of light on this magnificent blonde hair.

Adapting Neo-Impressionism to the early 1890s was a difficult choice; the public was not ready for this demanding style of painting, having barely come to terms with the Impressionist revolution. It was a more cerebral art. Laugé's portraits were no exception to this and were even more original than those of his contemporaries. Some are imbued with an austerity and frozen rigour that is still astonishing today. Even the seriousness of the Cathar country shines through, poetry and seduction are also present, like in the present work, because the method is more empirical than Seurat's, because Laugé is not pursuing a dream of *art-science*, to use André Chastel's expression. Laugé is not a follower like many in Paris, he thinks, but he has his own expression and in this he must be part of any collection of 19th century art, alongside the others.

The work will be published in the catalogue raisonné in preparation by Nicole Tamburini (the work will be sold with a certificate from Nicole Tamburini).