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Harald Gallén (1880-1931) - Twilight In Lapland, Finland



3 900 EUR

Signature : Harald Gallén (1880-1931)
Period : 20th century
Condition : Très bon état
Material : Oil painting on wood
Diameter : 25 cm
Height : 33 cm

Description

Harald Gallén (1880-1931) Finland

Lappland at Dusk, Finland
The artist original title: "Skymning i Lappland"

signed Harald Gallen and dated 1915 Kuolajärvi
oil on board
unframed c. 33 x 25 cm (approx. 13 x 10 inches)
framed 43 x 34 cm (approx. 17 x 13 inches)

Provenance:
Gift from the artist to Aarne Bygglin 1919, Tammerfors.

Essay:
This painting is characterized by a cool, turquoise sky that contrasts against snow-covered hills and

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trees. The artist Harald Gallén has painted the snow in flowing, almost sculptural forms, creating a dynamic rhythm in the foreground. The snow-laden trees appear surreal, and the heavy application of paint gives the impression of depth and texture. The turquoise sky reflects Gallén's fascination with the light in the north region, while the abstracted forms of the snow are reminiscent of Japanese influences, which the artist is known to have drawn from following his time in Japan a year before this painting was completed.

"Harald the Dandy"
Harald Gallén was an artist, diplomat, and cosmopolitan. Gallén was also openly homosexual at a time when such openness was illegal in most countries. Gallén's life reflected both artistic brilliance and a flamboyant persona, often described as a "dandy"--a term that originated in 18th-century London and Paris, used for a man of middle-class origin who aspired to appear aristocratic through exaggerated elegance in dress and behavior.

Gallén, much like a dandy, was known for his extravagance and his fascination with heraldry, nobility, and medals. His art, as exemplified by "Skymning i Lappland, 1915" carries a subtle yet bold beauty, mirroring his personal defiance of societal norms. While he drew some inspiration from his famous uncle Akseli Gallen-Kallela, Gallén developed his own unique style, which can be seen in the almost mystical treatment of light and landscape in this painting. His use of the turquoise sky hints at an influence of Japanese aesthetics, likely inspired by his time spent in Japan just a year before creating this piece.

Gallén's Legacy and Queer History:
Harald Gallén's life was filled with travel and artistic exploration, but his diaries also reveal the struggles and triumphs of being a homosexual man in the early 20th century, when it was illegal

in most places. His openness about his sexuality, as captured in his diaries, letters, and art, offers a rare and bold perspective for the time. Today, his work and his personal history offer a window into queer history, a narrative often missing from mainstream art history.

Gallén exhibited frequently during his lifetime, but his works fell into relative obscurity following his death in 1931. However, his personal papers, archived in Finland, suggest that he had hoped to publish a memoir detailing his life as a gay man in a repressive era. Gallén's work, much like his personal life, is a testament to his refusal to conform, making him an intriguing figure not only in art history but also in the queer history.

With "Skymning I Lappland, 1915" we are not only looking at a representation of Lapland's landscape but also at the traces of an artist who sought to capture the beauty of the world while asserting his identity in the face of societal constraints.

Literature:
Rita Paqvalén, Queera minnen: Essäer om tystnad, längtan och motstånd.
Källan, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, no 1/2021.