



Claude Firmin (1864-1944) Portrait Of The Industrialist And Patron Arthur Fontaine, Avignon



5 500 EUR

Signature : Claude Firmin-Goy

Period : 19th century

Condition : Parfait état

Material : Pastel

Length : 63 cm hors cadre

Width : 50 cm hors cadre

Description

Claude FIRMIN (Avignon, 1864 - Avignon, 1944) Portrait of the industrialist and patron Arthur Fontaine Pastel H. 63 cm; W. 50 cm Signed, dated and dedicated To my friend Mr Fontaine lower left 1901 Provenance: private collection in the Southwest Considered one of the masters of Provençal and particularly Avignon painting (the Calvet Museum holds several works), Claude Firmin (known as "le Goy", meaning the lame one in Provençal) trained at the Avignon School of Fine Arts from 1878; he would later become its director between 1937 and 1941. He exhibited for the first time at the Paris Salon in 1889 and the following year chose to join Léon Bonnat's studio to further his training. At the Salon, he exhibited numerous views of Provence and North Africa, as well as a few

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Parisian scenes, with a particular fondness for traditional trades: locksmiths' workshops, knife grinders' shops, blacksmiths' workshops, markets, and secondhand shops. His vigorous painting style perfectly suited the ruggedness and simplicity of these everyday scenes. Claude Firmin was also an excellent portraitist (he exhibited regularly at the Salon), as evidenced by our vibrant and powerful pastel. The sitter is a renowned industrialist, international labor law legislator, and patron of the arts, Arthur Victor Léon Fontaine (Paris, 1860 - Paris, 1931). A graduate of the École Polytechnique and a mining engineer, he began to take an interest in the economic and, above all, social issues of labor (law and organization) in 1891 when he joined the Office of Labor, which he directed from 1899 to 1919. In this field, he also became involved internationally from 1900 onward, and was one of the founders of the International Labour Organization in 1919, serving as its president until his death. Alongside this, Fontaine was a man of letters and a lover of the arts in general. His marriage in 1889 to the soprano Marie Escudier (1865-1946), from a family of painters, facilitated his access to this artistic milieu. He was a friend and supporter of André Gide, Francis Jammes, Claude Debussy, and Rodin, among others, whom he regularly hosted at his various residences in the 7th arrondissement of Paris, on Avenue de Villars, Avenue de Saxe, and Boulevard Raspail. Among the painters in his circle of friends, whose work he helped exhibit and collected, were Maurice Denis, Charles Lacoste, Renoir, Bonnard, and Eugène Carrière, but he was particularly close to Édouard Vuillard and Odilon Redon, who painted several portraits of him (and his family), often depicted reading. The Fontaine couple even spent a few days of vacation in Saint-Georges-de-Didonne at Odilon Redon's home (Redon painted Arthur and Marie, a pastel of which is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art) in September 1901, the year of our pastel. Was Claude Firmin also in the area? In

any case, our pastel tells us that he too was part of Fontaine's circle.