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Ernest Guérin (1887-1952), "the Surroundings Of Loctudy," Watercolor--brittany

1 500 EUR



Signature : Ernest Guérin (1887 - 1952)

Period : 20th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Water color

Width : 24cm

Height : 18,5cm

Description

This delicate watercolour by Ernest Guérin, inscribed by the artist "Environs de Loctudy - Bretagne" ("Near Loctudy - Brittany"), offers a remarkable synthesis of the qualities that make his work so distinctive: a Brittany observed with precision, yet immediately transfigured through memory, silence and poetry. A painter and illuminator profoundly attached to his native land, Guérin made Brittany the almost exclusive territory of his artistic imagination. Trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Rennes, he became an accomplished watercolourist and miniaturist, developing an instantly recognisable visual language nourished both by medieval illumination and by Japanese and Chinese art. Coastal landscapes, fishermen and their boats naturally occupy a privileged place within his

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oeuvre. Here, in the surroundings of Loctudy, on the southern coast of Finistère whose shores Guérin knew and painted so intimately, the artist deliberately avoids any sense of spectacle. Instead, he chooses the almost absolute horizontality of a spare coastal landscape: a handful of white houses emerges in the distance, a narrow stretch of water winds its way between the dunes, while two boats punctuate the foreground. To the right, a small group of figures seated on the grass and, farther away, several tiny silhouettes are sufficient to introduce a discreet human presence. It is precisely in this disproportion between the immensity of the landscape and the minuteness of the human figure that much of Guérin's poetry resides. His figures never seek to dominate nature; rather, they inhabit it discreetly, becoming almost signs within the landscape, small touches of life set against the vastness of the Breton countryside. In the present watercolour, this conception reaches a particularly accomplished expression. The sky occupies almost two-thirds of the sheet. Nearly empty, delicately modulated in pearly grey, pale pink and faint mauve tones, it is interrupted only by the slightest bluish accent. This silent expanse lends the composition both its breadth and its meditative character. Guérin does not so much describe the sky as suggest its immensity. The land itself is rendered with remarkable economy. Tender greens across the meadows and dunes alternate with blond, pinkish and sandy tones along the shore. A few touches of blue define the water, while darker strokes are sufficient to establish the forms of the boats. The watercolour remains wonderfully transparent and light, allowing the paper itself to breathe and become an integral part of the luminosity of the composition. Guérin's mastery lies precisely in this ability to say much with very little. Perhaps it is the two boats, however, that provide the composition with its true visual anchor. One, still resting upon the water and carrying its mast, introduces an almost solitary vertical into a

landscape otherwise governed by horizontal lines; the other, drawn up onto the shore, appears darker and more substantial. Through their silent presence, they evoke the daily life of Breton fishermen without the need to describe it explicitly. In Guérin's work, such vessels become discreet symbols of a maritime existence inseparable from the surrounding landscape. To the right, several women -- most probably Breton women -- are reduced to minute touches of blue, green, white, red and violet. Despite their diminutive scale, Guérin succeeds in giving them an extraordinary presence. Here one recognises the hand of the miniaturist and illuminator: a few points of colour and a handful of precise strokes are enough to conjure an entire little world. Yet this attention to detail never disturbs the monumentality of the landscape; it merely animates it, like a subtle vibration. The work thus reveals a remarkable tension between precision and restraint. Nothing is truly anecdotal, and yet everything has been carefully observed: the stones scattered across the sand, the gentle undulations of the terrain, the low vegetation, the white houses along the horizon, the boats and the distant figures. All these elements, however, remain subordinate to a much broader conception of space. It is here that Guérin transcends mere regionalist painting. His Brittany is not simply a geographical place -- even though the handwritten inscription "Environs de Loctudy - Bretagne" firmly anchors the scene in reality. It becomes instead an interior and timeless Brittany, almost dreamlike, stripped of the signs of modern life. The artist conveys less a particular moment than a sense of permanence: a low-lying land open to the ocean, an ever-changing light, and a human community whose existence seems intimately bound to the landscape. Ernest Guérin (1887-1952) "Environs de Loctudy, Brittany" Watercolor, 18,5x24cm. Dimensions with frame : 35x41cm Signed lower right This quality also accounts for the discreet modernity of the work. Beneath its apparent simplicity lies a

remarkably daring compositional economy: an exceptionally low horizon, an immense sky, a few forms and a handful of coloured accents. The influence of Far Eastern art, so often discernible in Guérin's oeuvre, seems particularly resonant here: emptiness is never absence, but rather becomes one of the principal elements of the composition. Environs de Loctudy may therefore be regarded as a particularly eloquent expression of Ernest Guérin's artistic sensibility: a Brittany at once humble and monumental, where a few boats, a handful of figures and several distant houses are enough to evoke an entire world. Beneath his brush, the Breton landscape ceases to be merely picturesque. It becomes memory, silence and contemplation -- as though, before this vast expanse of earth and sky, time itself had momentarily come to a standstill.