

Khalil Saleeby * 1870-1928

Planche N° 3

Paysan libanais de Btalloun, 1926

Huile 36 × 45 cm

Collection privée Dr Samir Saleeby

Dès 1890, il étudie la peinture académique à Edimbourg, aux USA puis à Paris sous la direction de Puvis de Chavannes.

Saleeby qui rompt avec la tradition des peintres artisans, peut être considéré comme le premier représentant du mouvement romantique au Liban. Se détournant de l'art religieux et s'attachant presque exclusivement à l'étude du «nu», il va non seulement explorer une nouvelle échelle de vision, mais surtout préparer les esprits à l'éclosion des sentiments individualistes.

Libéré de tout formalisme et bien nourri des idées libérales des Anglo-Saxons, il se replie sur lui-même, et travaille à exploiter son intériorité. Seules les impressions qui parlent directement au cœur l'intéressent et cependant que ses contemporains se faisaient un devoir de conformer leurs goûts aux exigences de l'opinion, lui prenait plaisir à laisser aller son pinceau au gré de sa sensibilité. Epris de la beauté du corps humain, il en fit presque exclusivement une source d'inspiration, et plus d'une fois il sacrifiait les données de la psychologie au profit de ses goûts d'artiste.

Se donnant toute liberté dans le choix du sujet, Saleeby apporte tout son génie à développer ses thèmes dans les couleurs les plus appropriées. Remarquable par son élégance, il dote ses toiles de cette fraîcheur que sa touche sûre et franche, ne rend que plus lumineuse.

C'est à Btalloun petit village de la montagne que Saleeby a pris la douceur de ses couleurs. Et le peintre qui d'Edimbourg à Paris et de Paris au Liban a promené son dégoût, pour venir se faire tuer avec sa femme à Beyrouth, l'été de l'année 1928, fut un pur libanais.

Joseph Abou Rizk

Khalil Saleeby 1870-1928

Plate N° 3

Lebanese Peasant from Btalloun, 1926

Oil 36 × 45 cm

Private Collection Dr. Samir Saleeby

As early as 1890, Khalil Saleeby was studying academic painting in Edinburgh, and after that in the United States and in Paris where he came under the direction of Puvis de Chavannes.

By breaking with the tradition of artisan painters, Saleeby can be considered as the first representative of the Romantic movement in Lebanon. Turning from religious art and devoting himself almost exclusively to the study of the nude, he not only explored a new scale of vision but above all prepared the intellectual climate for the blossoming of the expression of personal feelings.

Free of all formalism and full of the liberal ideas of the Anglo-Saxon world, he turned in toward himself and worked on the development of his interiority. Only those impressions which spoke directly to his heart were of interest to him, and whereas his contemporaries were obliging themselves to make their tastes conform to the demands of the public, he took pleasure in freeing his brush to move according to his moods and his sensitivity. Captivated by the beauty of the human body, he made of it the almost exclusive source of his inspiration and more than once sacrificed psychological reality in favour of his tastes as an artist.

Giving himself absolute liberty in the choice of subject, Saleeby brought all his genius to bear on the development in his themes of the most appropriate choice of colour. With remarkable elegance, he gave his canvases that freshness which his clear sure touch rendered only more luminous.

It was from the small mountain village of Btalloun that Saleeby drew the softness of his colours. And the painter who dragged his disgust from Edinburgh to Paris and from Paris to Lebanon in order to come and be killed along with his wife in Beirut in the summer of 1928 was a pure Lebanese.

Joseph Abou Rizk