

Lot 1259



Auction **Fine Art**

Date 14.11.2024, ca. 15:45

Preview 07.11.2024 - 10:00:00 bis
10.11.2024 - 18:00:00

SCHENDEL, PETRUS VAN
1806 Terheyde - 1870 Brussels

Title: The Writer.

Young woman writes by the light of an oil lamp following her father's dictation in the family circle.

Date: Ca. 1839.

Technique: Oil on wood.

Measurement: 61.5 x 53cm.

Notation: Signed lower right: "P. van Schendel fecit".

Frame: Framed.

Inscribed P. van Schendel twice on the reverse as well as collection seal (not read) and brand (presumably of the frame maker) "GvB".

Provenance:

Private ownership, Germany;

Acquired in 1977 from Kunsthandel Herbert P. Ulrich, Berlin.

We are grateful to Jan de Meere, Boutersem, for his help in cataloguing the present painting on the basis of a high-resolution digital photograph.

The exploration of light has historically been a defining element of painting. From the Renaissance to contemporary photography, capturing special moods and sources of light in a picture has been a challenge and an incentive for artists. Masters such as Georges de la Tour and Gerrit Dou made this subject their speciality in the 17th century.

In the 19th century, the Belgian/Dutch painter Petrus von Schendel was famous and admired for his virtuoso depictions of various materials in special nocturnal lighting conditions. The Belgian son of an impoverished family, his talent won him a place at the Academy in Antwerp and he was soon regularly taking part in exhibitions and salons. He received honours and medals for his finely painted night scenes with moonlight or cleverly used artificial light sources and became one of the most commercially successful Belgian painters of his time. His contemporary market and genre scenes were just as successful as his historical and religious themes. The artist was also in great demand as a portraitist.

In addition to his illustrious career as a painter, Petrus van Schendel was also involved in art theory and wrote works in this field. As an inventor, he was also active in the field of brake and tool technology and registered several patents. In 1869, van Schendel, whose mother worked as a market woman, was awarded Belgium's highest honour, the Order of Leopold, for his achievements.

This atmospheric genre piece by Petrus van Schendel still works today exactly as the painter might have wished some 150 years ago: its painterly quality casts a spell over the viewer, carrying them away to a bygone era and inviting them to interpret and understand what they see.

Five people are gathered around a table. No daylight enters the room; only an oil lamp with a large flame illuminates the scene. In terms of fashion, the painter takes us back to the 17th century. But now the speculation begins: the older man standing and the older woman in the green dress sitting next to him are probably the parents of the two young women, one of whom is writing a document according to her father's dictation. The young man sitting in the foreground is the only one with a glass and a jug in front of him. Is he part of the family or is he an outsider? Is the couple writing their will here in the family council? Or is it a marriage contract or a business agreement? This constellation of people certainly provides an invitation to discussion. It is a rich household: people are wearing fur and the finest fabrics, which the artist has mastered just as skilfully as the depiction of the fragile, thin glass or the reflections of light on the silver writing utensils.

Jan de Meere, who has the painting as a high-resolution digital photograph, suggests a date of around 1839, a period in which van Schendel painted many historical subjects. It is possible that the present painting is identical to the work 'Eine häusliche Tafel bei Lampenschein' (Een huisselijk tafereel bij lamplicht), which was shown under the number 358 at an 'Exhibition of Living Artists' in The Hague in 1839 and was awarded a silver medal.

Estimate: 20.000 € - 40.000 €, Hammer: 18.000 €

