



Jan Toorop (1858-1928)

The Dream of the Seven Hills (De Droom der Zeven Heuvelen), c. 1914

Pencil, black chalk and wax crayon
5 3/4 by 9 3/4 inches (14.7 by 24.8 cm.)
Signed 'JTHToorop' & inscribed 'No.3'

Provenance

H. P. Bremmer (1871-1956), The Hague
By descent to a private collection, The Netherlands
Sale, Amsterdam, Christie's, 1 December 1998, lot 211
Kunsthandel Studio 2000, Blaricum
Triton Collection Foundation, The Netherlands, 2004
Their sale, Christie's, Paris, 25 March 2015, lot 22

Exhibited

The Hague, Gemeentemuseum, *Têtes Fleuries: 19e en 20e-eeuwse portretkunst uit de Triton Foundation / 19th and 20th Century Portraiture from the Triton Foundation*, 2007
Rotterdam, Kunsthall, *15 jaar Marlies Dekkers / 15 Years Marlies Dekkers*, 2008

Literature

Cornelis Easton, J.E. Heeres & Anton van der Valk, *Het boek der Koningin*, Amsterdam 1919, p. 8, ill.
Hans Janssen, *Têtes Fleuries: 19th and 20th Century Portraiture from the Triton Foundation*, The Hague 2007, p. 17, ill.
Sjraar van Heugten, *Avant-gardes 1870 to the present: The Collection of the Triton Foundation*, Brussels 2012, p. 127, p. 132 ill.

Note

Jan Theodoor Toorop was born on 20 December 1858 in Purworejo on the Island of Java in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). He was a descendant of a Dutch-Indonesian father and a British mother, but moved to the Netherlands at the age of eleven. In 1880, Toorop enrolled at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. From 1882 to 1886, he lived in Brussels, where he became closely involved with *Les XX (Les Vingts)*, a group of progressive artists centered around James Ensor (1860-1949). Talented and adventurous, Toorop embraced stylistic trends with alacrity. By the early 1890s he had experimented with Impressionism and Pointillism, and introduced ideas of innocence, evil, death, and the afterlife in mysterious allegorical works characterized by intricately patterned forms and swirling lines that recall the art of his land of origin.

After his marriage to the British Annie Hall in 1886, Toorop split his time between The Hague, Brussels and England. After 1890, Toorop also spent time in the Dutch seaside town of Katwijk aan Zee. Around 1905, like many artists of his time, Toorop would turn to Catholicism. In 1908 he even moved to Nijmegen, one of the oldest Dutch cities close to the German border and the center of Dutch Catholicism at the time. Toorop developed more certainty in his mysticism while church doctrine allowed him a clear iconography. From 1910 on, Toorop's health prevented him from long hours behind the easel and he focused on works on paper. Toorop died on 3 March 1928 in The Hague.

The sleeping subject of *The Dream of the Seven Hills* is the young poetess Miek Janssen (1890-1953), Toorop's muse and mistress from 1912 until his death in 1928. Possibly the title refers to a dream about the city of Rome, the city built on seven hills and capital of the Catholic faith. A sketch from the same period with eyes piercing over a landscape, adorned with their interlaced monogram OM (for Miek and Olaf, his nickname) suggests a religious connotation: its title *Witte Donderdag - Goede Vrijdag* (*Maundy Thursday - Good Friday*) refers to the Holy Week, commemorating Jesus's Last Supper and the Eucharist.¹

Jan Toorop

Witte Donderdag-Goede Vrijdag, signed & dated JThT 1914
Pencil, 13.5 x 13.5 cm., present location unknown



The Dream of the Seven Hills was published in 1919 in *Het boek der koningin* (*The book of the Queen*), a present to Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands on the occasion of the end of World War I.² Its first owner was H.P. Bremmer (1871-1957), the influential Dutch art critic, who played a major role in introducing contemporary art to a broader audience. He organized art classes where well-to-do ladies were educated in appreciating the art of their time. Many Dutch artists were given advice what to paint and collectors what to acquire. His most prominent pupil was Hélène Kröller-Müller, one of the richest women in the Netherlands at the time. The important collection she built with Bremmer's advice is now in the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo.

¹ Inscribed "Vreemd en sidderend ziels-gezoem...../ Wolk omwaade sterren dooven,/ Als door dauw bestreelde bloem,/ Smarten -wijde lijdens-oogen....." (*Strange and shuddering soul-buzz..... / Cloud fanned stars quench, / Like dew-streaked flower, / Sorrows-wide suffering-eyes.....*)

² C. Easton, *op.cit.*, p. 8