



Valerius de Saedeleer (Belgium 1867 - 1941)

Winter on the River

Circa: 1906

The vast solitude of a winter's day is brilliantly conveyed in this painting by **Valerius de Saedeleer**. A motionless river crosses the composition bending out of sight behind a row of trees. Nestled amongst them are farm buildings whose snow-covered roofs are repeated by distant haystacks. Without further human presence, our thoughts extend from the foreground carpet of snow to the limitless universe.

The near religious presentation of a winter's day recalls Caspar David Friedrich's early 19th century landscapes. The pale sun, as if hanging by a thread, also appears in James McNeill Whistler's monochrome views of the Thames. The silence and isolation can be seen in Fernand Khnopff's contemporary landscapes near the village of Fosset. Similarly, the limited grey and white color palette was used to great effect in the interiors by the Danish artist Vilhelm Hammershøi.

Married with five daughters, Saedeleer moved in 1898 to the Flemish artist's village Sint-Martens-Latem, located 50 miles from Ghent. As a prominent member of the so-called School of Latem, he exhibited in Berlin, Munich and at the Vienna Secession in 1904. His later landscapes became more decorative, incorporating Japanese-style effects.

With its bird's-eye view and low horizon line, our painting recalls 17th century Netherlandish landscapes. Inevitably, any Flemish winter scene traces its lineage to Bruegel's *Hunters Returning in the Snow*.

Later in his career Saedeleer wrote: "Snow is peace and protection, snow conceals, completes and covers. When the sky no longer knows what sort of blessing to give the world, it gives snow".

First exhibited in Brussels in 1906, *Winter on the River / The Ferryman's House* is in excellent condition and expertly framed.

It is a subtle reminder of nature's beauty and our short time to enjoy it.

Exhibitions

Brussels, Kunstkring Labeur, 1906

Literature:

Valery D'Hondt, Valerius de Saedeleer – Zijn leven en Zijne Kunst, in Nieuw Leven voor het Arr. Aalst, jg. I, July-Aug. 1909, p. 191, no.19