

WILLOW GALLERY



Le Parc de M. et Mme Utrillo au Vésinet

Maurice Utrillo (1883 - 1955)

Oil on canvas, signed. Painted c. 1940.

Canvas size: 38 x 51.5in / 97 x 131cm

Frame size: 43.5 x 57in / 111 x 145cm

PROVENANCE

Sale: Sotheby's, New York, November 12, 1988, lot 362

Sale: Me Jean Staehli, Geneva, June 13, 1990, lot 158

Private Collection, Switzerland

LITERATURE

Paul Pétridès, L'Œuvre complet de Maurice Utrillo, Paris, 1969, vol. III, no. 2074, illustrated p. 259

This painting is sold with a photo-certificate from Hélène Bruneau of the Association Maurice Utrillo, and will be included in the next volume of the Catalogue Raisonné

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Utrillo was the son of the artist Suzanne Valadon (born Marie-Clémentine Valadon), who was then an eighteen-year-old artist's model. She never revealed who had been the father of her child; speculation exists that he was the offspring from a liaison with an equally young amateur painter named Boissy, or with the well-established painter, Pierre-Cécile Puvis de Chavannes, or even with Renoir. In 1891 a Spanish artist, Miguel Utrillo y Molins, signed a legal document acknowledging paternity, although the question remains as to whether he was in fact the child's father.

Valadon, who had become a model after a fall from a trapeze ended her chosen career as a circus acrobat, found that posing for Berthe Morisot, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and others provided her with an opportunity to study their techniques; in some cases, she had also become their mistress. She taught herself to paint, and when Toulouse-Lautrec introduced her to Edgar Degas, he became her mentor. Eventually she became a peer of the artists she had posed for.

Meanwhile, her mother was left in charge of raising the young Maurice, who soon showed a troubling inclination toward truancy and alcoholism. When a mental illness took hold of the twenty-one year old Utrillo in 1904, he was encouraged to paint by his mother. He soon showed real artistic talent. With no training beyond what his mother taught him, he drew and painted what he saw in Montmartre. After 1910 his work attracted critical attention, and by 1920 he was internationally acclaimed. In 1928, the French government awarded him the Cross of the Légion d'honneur. Throughout his life, however, his mental disorder would result in his being interned in mental asylums repeatedly.

In middle age Utrillo became fervently religious and in 1937, at the age of fifty-four, he married Lucie Valore and moved to Le Vesinet, just outside of Paris. Although his life also was plagued by alcoholism, he lived into his seventies. Maurice Utrillo died on 5 November 1955, and was buried in the Cimetière Saint-Vincent in Montmartre.

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