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JACQUES-ÉMILE BLANCHE (Paris 1861 - 1942 Offranville, Seine-Maritime)

Place Saint Marc à Venise le Soir 1912

oil on panel

83 x 106 cm

signed lower right : J E Blanche April 1912

Exhibited:

J.E.Blanche, his work, Leicester Gallery, London, 1939, cat. no. 78

Literature:

To be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of the work of Jacques Emile Blanche currently being prepared by Jane Roberts and the Comité Blanche

JACQUES- ÉMILE BLANCHE 1861 - 1942

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Primarily renowned as a portrait painter, most particularly for his iconic image of the writer Marcel Proust (1892; Musée d'Orsay), Blanche's talents also extended towards still life, landscapes, beach scenes and the occasional genre scene, often connected with the dazzling social circle that his considerable wealth and social status afforded him. A self-taught artist and avid and informed collector, Blanche spent some time in the studio of Manet and the flat quality of his surfaces, with light effects rendered in loose brushstrokes of silvery grey, and inclusions of often vivid colour caused Blanche's work to be compared with that of Manet, and yet also with the Impressionists, at least in terms of his earlier works.

Blanche's circle included members of the avant-garde and the haute-bourgeoisie, and he painted portraits of (among others), Jean Cocteau, André Gide, the Vicomtesse Anne de Noailles, Paul Claudel, Maurice Maeterlinck, Vaslav Nijinsky, the poet Pierre Louÿs, the family of Norwegian painter Frits Thaulow, and Yvette Guilbert.

Essay from Lauraine Diggins Fine Art Collectors' Exhibition 2016

Highly regarded as a portrait painter, most particularly for his iconic image of the writer Marcel Proust in the Musée d'Orsay, Blanche was a popular painter in artistic, intellectual and bourgeois circles. His oeuvre included still life, landscapes, beach scenes and the occasional genre scene, often connected with the dazzling social circle in which he moved and which his wealthy family and privileged and cosmopolitan upbringing afforded him.

Blanche received some early training under Henri Gervex and Jacques-Fernand Humbert, and spent time in the more advanced studios of Manet and Degas, but he is generally acknowledged to have been self-taught. The flat quality of his surfaces, with light effects rendered in loose brushstrokes and inclusions of often vivid colour lead to a comparison with Manet and also the Impressionists.

An avid and informed collector as well as an artist, Blanche's circle included members of the avant-garde and the haute-bourgeoisie, and his portraits included the Australians Charles Conder and Percy Grainger; as well as Jean Cocteau, André Gide, the Vicomtesse Anne de Noailles, Paul Claudel, Maurice Maeterlinck, Vaslav Nijinsky, the poet Pierre Louÿs, the family of Norwegian painter Frits Thaulow, Aubrey Beardsley, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Claude Debussy and Yvette Guilbert.

Around 1884, Blanche frequently visited London, where he worked closely with James MacNeill Whistler and William Sickert, and from 1887, he exhibited regularly at the New English Art Club. By the 1890s he was regarded as a successful portrait painter, sought after by fashionable society. He exhibited at the Salon from 1882 to 1889 and at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts from 1890. He was awarded a gold medal at the Exposition Legion d'Honneur in 1900. In the early 1900s, Blanche ran a successful teaching atelier that attracted many students from Russia, Britain and Australia including Henry Lamb, Kathleen O'Connor and Rupert Bunny.

In 1912, Blanche was invited to participate in the Venice Biennale, with the

establishment of France's pavilion. is delightful painting of the famous grand square at St Mark's captures a sense of the bustle of the handsome Edwardian crowd amid the beauty of the illuminated city.

A retrospective of Blanche's work was held at the Musee de l'Orangerie in 1943. As well as the Musee d'Orsay, Blanche's work is in the collection of the National Gallery, London and is celebrated by a dedicated room at the Museum of Beaux-Arts Rouen. He is represented in the National Gallery of Australia; the National Library of Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria.

Biography:

Jacques-Émile Blanche was born the son of an eminent pathologist and was raised in the stylish Parisian neighbourhood of Passy in a house which once belonged to the Princess de Lamballe, and enjoyed a privileged and cosmopolitan upbringing. Blanche received some early training under Henri Gervex and Jacques-Fernand Humbert, and spent time in the more advanced studios of Manet and Degas, but he is generally acknowledged to have been self-taught.

From about 1884, Blanche made frequent trips to London, where he spent a formative period working closely with James MacNeill Whistler and William Sickert. From 1887, he exhibited regularly at the New English Art Club. He also spent significant periods at his home in Dieppe which became a locus for French and English artistic and literary celebrities, several of whom sat for portraits by Blanche including Degas (Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art), Aubrey Beardsley, James Joyce, and Walter Sickert (all London, National Portrait Gallery). During the 1890s he became a successful portrait painter of fashionable society, exhibiting with the Société Nationales and winning a gold medal at the Exposition Legion d' Honneur in 1900 and the Salon des Tuileries in 1933. Blanche exhibited at the Salon from 1882 to 1889 and at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts from 1890. In 1884, together with Ary Renan, he organized and exhibited at the first Salon des Indépendants at the Galerie Georges Petit in Paris. This was an eclectic show of Neo-Impressionist, Symbolist and other works. He held his first one-man exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Paris in 1914, and a retrospective exhibition took place at the Musee de l'Orangerie in 1943.

He was also a regular exhibitor in London at the Leicester Galleries and was given a monographic show at the National Gallery, a rare distinction for a living painter. In London, Blanche was an important Parisian contact for Oscar Wilde, through whom he met Marcel Proust in 1891. They had first met in 1883, while Wilde was trying to gain a footing in the French capital, after his tour of America. Wilde and Blanche shared many friends including Beardsley, Sickert, Charles Edward Conder, and Sir John Rothenstein. Later in 1927, Blanche shared the same sort of relationship with Virginia Wolff, whom he also introduced to Parisian intellectual circles.

In the early 1900s, Blanche had a successful teaching atelier that attracted many students from Australia, Russia and Britain including Henry Lamb, Kathleen O'Connor and Rupert Bunny. Blanche was also a prolific writer and published many books of which his most famous are *Mes Modeles* (1928), *Portraits of a Lifetime 1870 - 1914*, (1937), and *More Portraits of a Lifetime 1918 - 1938*, (1939).

The Matthiesen Gallery, London