



Untitled

Geneviève Asse

Not on display

Title/Description: Untitled

Artist/Maker: Geneviève Asse

Object Type: Painting

Materials: Gouache, Paper

Measurements: h 482 x w 624mm (frame: h 641 x w 780 x d 58mm)

Accession Number: SAC 3

Production Place: France

Credit Line: Bequeathed by Lady Sainsbury, 2014

Genevieve Asse was born in Valves, France in 1923, but spent her childhood growing up on the Rhuys Peninsula in Brittany. A large part of her artistic inspiration is accredited to this region, the imagery of which had 'not departed over the course of a long life' with its 'seemingly eternal power ... filling the artist's numerous as yet unpublished notebooks with the teeming traces of loved place'. [1] Yet, despite her love of Brittany Asse's work does not indicate or enforce a specific time or location, instead being defined by its light and space.

Following her time in Brittany, Asse moved to Paris in 1932. She enrolled at the National School of Decorative Arts in 1940, however stated that she did not learn anything about painting while she was there. [2] Her initial artistic focus was on depictions of everyday objects in intimate still lifes in which she retained an allegiance to specific colour schemes that revolved around the colour blue. During the 1940s she exhibited her work at both the *Salon des Moins Thirty* and at the *Salon d'Automne*, while also becoming committed to the cause of liberation throughout WWII. She joined the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) a group of the French resistance, and later the 1st Armoured division of the African army as an ambulance driver, as well as participating in the repatriation of French Jews from the Terezin camp. [3]

Following the war Asse became a much more independent artist developing an aesthetic vision in contact with other like-minded artists such as Nicolas de Staël (1914-1955), Viera da Silva (1908-1992), and Olivier Debré (1920-1999). Although Asse worked closely with other artists she never saw herself as belonging to any artistic groups or schools, instead retaining a desire for independence stating: 'I am ... and have always wanted to be as free as the air'. [4] Although Asse

did not want to be categorised into an artistic group, one defining feature of her work is her persistent use of the colour blue, given the name *bleu Asse*. [5] For Asse this colour represented space that allowed her work to attain ‘transparency, atmospheric shimmer, [and a] mobility of air, light, [and] colour’. [6]

This piece, which is untitled, presents a great example of a number of elements that are distinctly Asse’s. The presence of blue in this painting is undeniable, and while some form of landscape can be identified there are no specifics that attach it to a certain time or place. Instead, we can allow our gaze to enter a space that seems both familiar and entirely new.

Gemma Nicholls, May 2022

[1] Michael Bishop, *Contemporary French Art 2: Gérard Garouste, Colette Deblé, Georges Rousse, Geneviève Asse, Martial Raysse, Christian Jaccard, Joël Kermarrec, Danièle Perronne, Daniel Dezeuze, Philippe Favier, Daniel Nadaud* (Amsterdam: Brill, 2011), p. 69.

[2] Gallery Michelle Champetier, *Geneviève Asse* (2021) <<https://www.mchampetier.com/biography-Genevi%C3%A8ve-Asse.html>> [accessed 22 May 2022].

[3] AWARE, *Geneviève Asse* (2021) <<https://awarewomenartists.com/en/artiste/genevieve-asse/>> [accessed 22 May 2022].

[4] Michael Bishop, *Contemporary French Art 2: Gérard Garouste, Colette Deblé, Georges Rousse, Geneviève Asse, Martial Raysse, Christian Jaccard, Joël Kermarrec, Danièle Perronne, Daniel Dezeuze, Philippe Favier, Daniel Nadaud* (Amsterdam: Brill, 2011), p. 75.

[5] Centre Pompidou, *Geneviève Asse, paintings* (2013) <<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/program/calendar/event/cGEEExgn>> [accessed 22 May 2022].

[6] Michael Bishop, *Contemporary French Art 2: Gérard Garouste, Colette Deblé, Georges Rousse, Geneviève Asse, Martial Raysse, Christian Jaccard, Joël Kermarrec, Danièle Perronne, Daniel Dezeuze, Philippe Favier, Daniel Nadaud* (Amsterdam: Brill, 2011), p. 71.
