

# **DIDIER AARON**

*Paintings · Drawings · Sculpture*

**WALTER SAUER**

(Saint-Gilles, Brussels 1889 - 1927 Algiers)



***Lady with a black veil***

Black and coloured crayon

270 x 197 mm

Dated, signed and monogrammed: *19 WS 17 / Walter Sauer*

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

To be included in the catalogue of Walter Sauer's *oeuvre*,  
currently in preparation by Michel Massant.

Born in Brussels in 1889, Walter Sauer began his artistic training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles in 1903. He began under Louis François Moonens, before joining Constant Montald, one of the pioneers of Belgian symbolism, in 1906-07. Whilst in Montald's studio Sauer won the first prize for decorative composition. This prize earned him privileges at the Académie in 1908-09. In 1907, Sauer met a Japanese antique dealer who introduced him to the art of the East, and in particular to Japanese prints, an encounter which had a profound impact on his artistic output. In 1911, the Charles Buls Foundation awarded the artist a grant of 1000 gold francs, which allowed him to travel to France and Italy.

Close to symbolist circles thanks to his training, in 1914 Sauer participated in the *Salon de la Libre Esthétique*, which had succeeded the group of artists *Les XX* in 1894, and where painters such as Redon, Puvis-de-Chavannes, Maurice Denis and Theo van Rysselberghe exhibited works. At the outbreak of the Great War, the artist's fragile health allowed him to escape conscription and the trenches. In 1916, as the war continued, Sauer abandoned painting altogether in order to devote himself to drawing. He presented several drawings, all devoted to the female figure, at the *Salon des Peintres et Sculpteurs du Nu*, organised by Isy Brachot in 1917.

It was during the 1920s that the artist's career truly reached its peak. In 1923, at the *Cercle Artistique et Littéraire de Bruxelles*, Sauer exhibited drawings which were unusual in being enhanced with gold or silver leaf. In 1925, he participated with the Belgian delegation in *l'Exposition internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes de Paris*. In 1927, Baron Allard commissioned him to decorate a room in the Byzantine style. This important commission was an opportunity for the artist to travel to Spain and then to Algeria for his research. Tragically, it was whilst on this journey that Sauer died.

Sauer's evocative style of art brings him close to symbolism, with its rejection of narration in favour of more enigmatic images depicting women in contemplative attitudes, often in a more melancholic atmosphere. Sauer's work has resonances with French artists such as Gustave Moreau, Puvis-de-Chavannes and Odilon Redon, but also, Belgian artists such as Félicien Rops, Théo van Rysselberghe, and Fernand Khnopff, with whom Sauer shares a passion for the female figure.

The delicate strangeness that emanates from Sauer's drawings evokes a certain *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere, and has parallels with the novels of Huysmans or the poetry of Maeterlinck.

This drawing, signed and dated 1917, may have been presented at the *Salon des Peintres et Sculpteurs du Nu*. It is outstanding for the control with which it is drawn, and for the powerful juxtaposition of the large void on the left and the black of the veil, rendered in a way that invites comparison with Redon's *noirs*. A diagonal formed by the two hands of the young woman, as she raises them to touch her face in meditation, adds a particular dynamism to the image. As always with Sauer, no action is described: instead, the artist seeks to suggest a state of mind, the melancholy of a woman lost in her own thoughts.

*Femme en prière*  
1918  
Black and coloured crayon  
550 x 395 mm  
Private Collection



*Femme à l'écharpe*  
1919  
330 x 468 mm

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