



René Guiette (Antwerp, 1893 – Wilrijk (Antwerp), 1976)

La Villa rose (The Pink Villa), 1922

Oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm

Signed and dated lower right : *René Guiette / 22*

Exhibition :

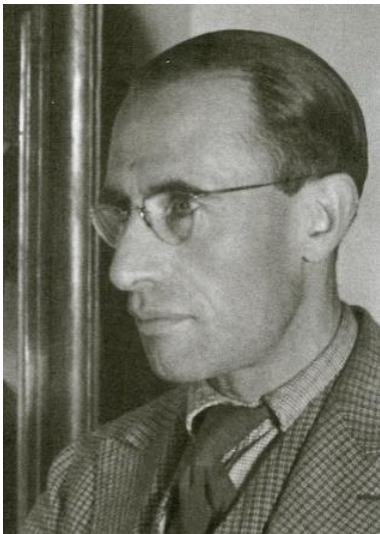
René Guiette, Antwerp, Salle Renis, 1924, n°24

Catalogue raisonné :

DE KERCHOVE D'OUSSELGHEM (Manuela), GOYENS DE HEUSCH (Serge), n°25.

A member of the Antwerp avant-garde, René Guiette exhibited the *Villa rose* at one of his first monographic exhibitions in Antwerp in 1924. The naive aspect of the painting and its basic visual means connect it to the Flemish Expressionism then in vogue.

René Guiette (Antwerp, 1893 – Wilrijk (Antwerp), 1976)



Born in Antwerp in 1893, René Guiette came from a family of artists¹. His father, whom he lost when he was still a child, was Luminist painter Jules Guiette (1852-1901), while his mother, Louise Pecquereau, was the daughter of painter and watercolorist Alphonse Pecquereau (1831-1917). Although he still received some lessons as a child from Antwerp painter and engraver Walter Vaes (1882-1958), he began painting essentially as an autodidact from 1919. While his first attempts were made in a post-impressionist aesthetic, it was Expressionism, and more particularly the works of Gus De Smet and Frits Van den Berghe, that would mark his beginnings (fig.1). Staying regularly in Paris from the 1920s onwards, Guiette became involved in avant-garde artistic and literary circles there. His pictorial work was then strongly influenced by Picasso and Synthetic Cubism. (fig.2). He also studied the works of Lhote, Gromaire and Zadkine. At the same time, he signed a contract with the famous Brussels gallery *Le Centaure*, where he exhibited regularly from 1926 onwards. He also worked as an art critic for the avant-garde Brussels magazine *Sélection*. Finally, at the 1925 Decorative Arts Exhibition, he admired the *Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau* designed by Le Corbusier. He then contacted the Swiss architect to build his studio house in Antwerp. (fig.3). This is the only Le Corbusier building in Belgium.

After the Second World War, René Guiette's work was transformed into a materialist work. In oil paint often laden with sand, Guiette engraved or painted in a primitive manner (fig.4). He then joined Jean Dubuffet's *Compagnie de l'Art Brut* in 1948. Interested in esotericism and Eastern philosophy, from 1955 onwards, under the influence of Zen philosophy, his painting

¹ His brother, Robert Guiette, (1895-1976) was a Romanic philologist, poet and French-speaking Belgian writer.

became more stripped down and calligraphic (fig.5). His painting was then promoted by the Parisian Stadler gallery, where Guiette met Antoni Tapiès, Marc Tobey, Sam Francis, and Georges Mathieu. It was also during this period that Guiette became a professor at the *École nationale supérieure des arts visuels de La Cambre*².

Suffering from stomach problems, René Guiette died in Antwerp in 1976, just ten days before his wife³.

La Villa rose (The Pink Villa)

A very simple landscape. A brown slanted path lined with trees. On the right-hand side, a grey wall pierced by a gate opens onto a garden and a house. This pink house has rectangular windows and a triangular roof. The sky is blue and the countryside green. This landscape is part of a series of landscapes around Antwerp painted by René Guiette in the first half of the 1920s (fig.6). Several of these landscapes were painted in Capellen, where the family of Marie Tinchant, who would become René Guiette's wife in November 1922, lived at the time. Several of these landscapes are centered on a slanted path. In any case, these landscapes all share a rather naive aspect with a strong poetic value. The volumes are simplified. Note, for example, the way of painting the trees with the volume of the trunk rendered by three bands of different tones (fig.7). The colors are primary and used in contrast. The green of the landscape highlights the pink of the villa. The motifs are basic and rendered by simple shapes, such as the rectangular house with a triangular roof. This naive aspect also appears at the same time with Flemish expressionists like Gus de Smet or Frits Van den Berghe, who influenced the work of René Guiette (fig.8). Manuela de Kerchove d'Ousselghem, the artist's granddaughter and an expert on his work, links these landscapes to the naive aesthetic of Douanier Rousseau (1844-1910) (fig.9) which also fascinated Picasso and his friends⁴.

The *Villa rose* was exhibited with 44 other works from 19 to 29 January 1924 at the René Guiette exhibition held at the Salle Renis in Antwerp (fig. 10), one of the Antwerp galleries active during the interwar period. This was an important moment because it was one of Guiette's

² He taught photography from 1946 to 1947 and then color harmony from 1953 onwards.

³ He married Marie Tinchant in 1922. The couple had three children.

⁴ See : DE KERCHOVE D'OUSSELGHEM (Manuela), GOYENS DE HEUSCH (Serge), p.21.

first exhibitions, as he was still a young artist. On this occasion, the Guiette brothers brought together texts by their writer and critic friends in the catalogue: Blaise Cendrars⁵, Franz Hellens, Paul Fierens, Max Jacob. The introduction, written with reference to a self-portrait by René Guiette, was written by Robert, the artist's writer brother (fig.11).

The painting is listed under number 25 and reproduced in the catalogue of René Guiette's work by Manuela de Kerchove d'Ousselghem.

Laurent Stevens, Art historian, 2025
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⁵ After a correspondence, Robert Guiette met Blaise Cendrars in 1921. See : TOURET, p.10.

Illustrations



Fig.1 : René Guiette, *Le Bateau de Sainte Anne*, 1926.



Fig.2 : René Guiette, *Le Fleuve*, 1928, Brussels, Fine Arts Museum of Belgium / c.1938, Antwerp, Verbaet collection.



Fig.3 : Le Corbusier, *Les Peupliers*, 1926-27, Antwerp.



Fig.4 : René Guiette, *Le Grand Port*, c.1948, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre George Pompidou / *Bateau rouge*, 1952 ? Antwerp, KMSKA.

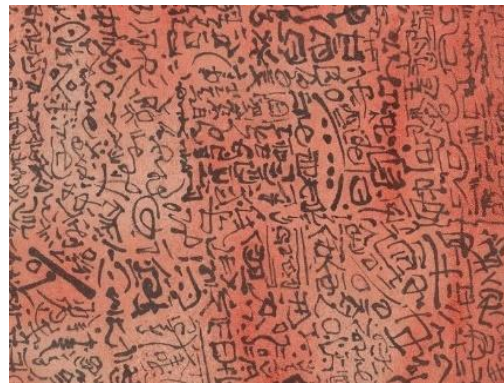
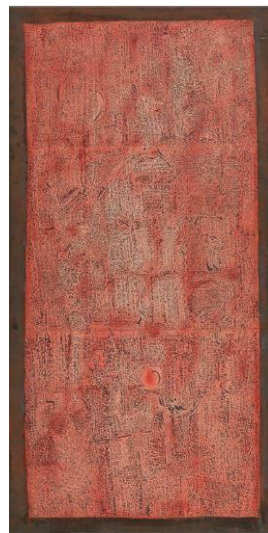


Fig.5 : René Guiette, 1968, Antwerp, Verbaet collection / *Ainsi*, 1964, Anvers, KMSKA (whole and detail).

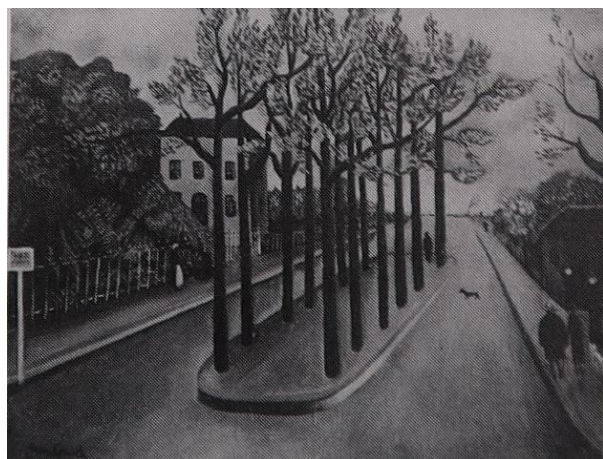


Fig.6 : René Guiette, first half of the 1920s.

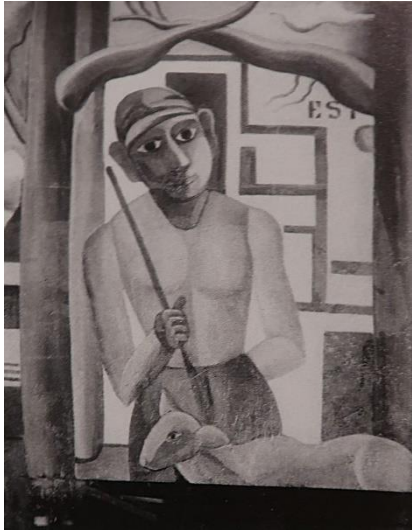


Fig.7 : René Guiette,
Petit Berger, 1922 / *La Marchande de ballons*,
c.1920.



Fig.8 : Gus De Smet, *Feast day in Deurle*, 1930, Ghent, MSK.



Fig.9 : Le Douanier Rousseau, *La Scierie de Bièvre*.



Tentoonstellingen. Van 10 tot 5 uur
Zaal Renis. René Guiette.
Zaal Loquet. C. Van den Oever.
Zaal Van Beers. Romaine Steppe.
Zaal Kon. Kunstverb. Verstraeten
Feestzaal. Marchand.

Fig.10 : Photograph of the René Guiette exhibition, Antwerp, Salle Renis, 1924 / His announcement in *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, January 19, 1924.

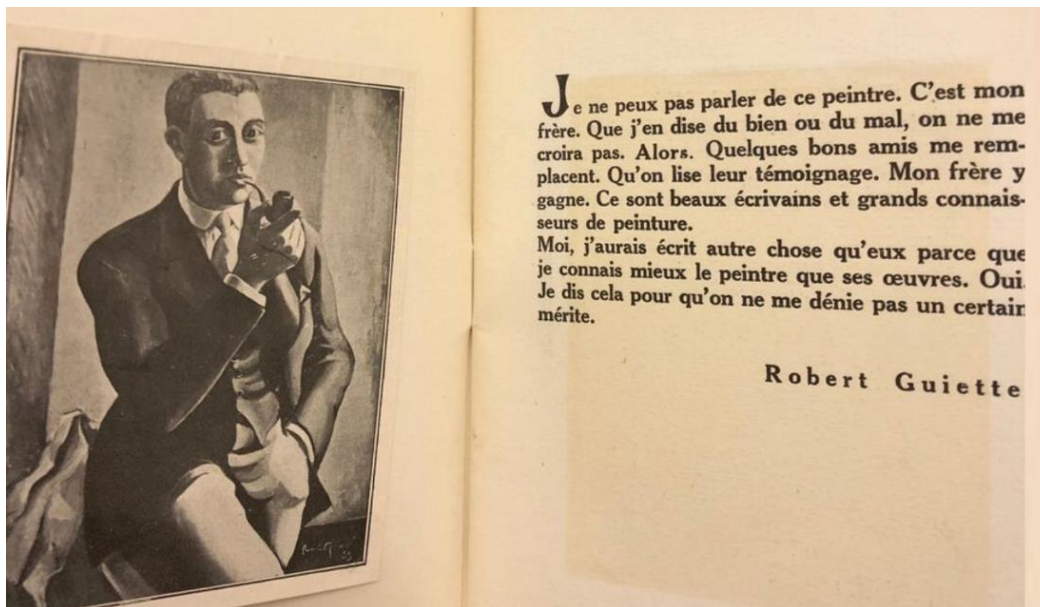


Fig.12 : René Guiette exhibition catalog, Antwerp, Salle Renis, 1924.

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