

AUGUSTE DURST

1842- 1930

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

1842

On 7 July 1842, Jean-Baptiste Auguste Durst was born in Neuilly-sur-Seine, son of Jean-Baptiste Romain Durst, originally from Colmar and Madeleine Bourgeaud, originally from Aix-en-Provence. Auguste had an older brother, Marius, a sculptor by trade, born on 9 April 1832 and a sister, Hélène, who was born a few years later.

1868

His parents, who had made a fortune from their restaurant, Les Jardins de Tilsitt, rue de Tilsitt, had quickly invested in real estate in Paris and the Paris region. On the death of his parents, Auguste Durst inherited substantial property income and devoted himself serenely to painting. That year, he was received for the first time at the Salon des Artistes Français, to which he remained faithful until 1889. He presented two paintings: *Kitchen girl* and *Flowers*.

1869

His participation in the Salon is still discreet. He represents the two paintings of last year.

1870

Auguste Durst had just begun his career two years before the war of 1870, and the uprising of the commune in which he participated under still mysterious conditions.

Accused of complicity, he is imprisoned in Brest. There, as he was about to be shot, he was pardoned thanks to the intervention of his camp leader with whom he had links and for whom he had made a portrait in the drawing. Released ahead of time in 1870-1871, he went into voluntary exile for two years with a cousin in London.

1872

He returned to France and found the family home, 30 rue de Tilsitt. He exhibits at the Salon des Artistes Français a *Portrait of Messrs*.

1874-1875

He presented two paintings at the Salon, a still life, *Fleurs*, and a *Crue de Seine*, a theme he would take up again and again throughout his career, notably in 1910 and 1911, the years of the great floods in Puteaux.

It was probably from 1875 onwards that Auguste Durst entered the workshop of Master Hébert.

1876-1877

It does not expose

1878-1879

In 1878, he sent a *Portrait of Mrs. Hugée M.* to the Salon, followed in 1879 by a very remarkable *portrait of Mrs. Widow Durst, his mother*.

1880

The Seine at the Pont de Neuilly, presented at the exhibition, faithfully shows the ravages of such a phenomenon.

1881

He made a name for himself at the annual Salon with a *Visit to the Farm*, a theme he studied throughout his career, and in which he endeavoured to represent the daily life of peasants and farm animals.

1882

He sends to the Salon a monumental canvas (2m x 4m) entitled *Hens*, not located, to date. It was during this period that he acquired a private mansion, located at 40 avenue de la Défense in Puteaux, where he set up his studio.

1883

He asserted himself with his favourite theme by presenting a country composition entitled *Turkeys* at the Annual Exhibition of the Society of French Artists.

Anxious to improve his technique, he joined Léon Bonnat's studio in Paris at the same time. In a letter from Bonnat dated 1884 and addressed to his friend Achille Zo, the master speaks of a young artist, Auguste Durst, in whom he had high hopes.

1884

He obtains the 2nd class medal at the Salon with a life-size composition called *The Nap*, a work that we only know from reproductions. Having been awarded the prize, he is exempted from presenting his works to the jury at each Salon. The painters are then said to be H.C - out of competition.

Bonnat buys him a work *Landscapes with Hens*, which the artist exhibits shortly afterwards at the Salon des Artistes Français. This painting is destined for the Bayonne Municipal Museum's municipal collection that Bonnat and Achille Zo, the Municipal Museum's curator, are beginning to build up.

1885

Faithful to the Salon des Artistes Français, he continues to exhibit life-size paintings: *The Waking Up* and *Spring Morning*. At that time, the size of his paintings and those of other artists of identical dimensions provoked a thousand polemics on the need to control, modify and impose size standards for the paintings at the Salon.

1886-1888

This is a period of intense artistic activity for Durst. His painting *Spring Morning*, which had caused a sensation the previous year, asserted itself as a first-rate canvas and aroused the enthusiasm of the public at its exhibition at the Salon of the Society of Friends of the Arts of Pau. The city of Pau will buy this work thanks to the donation of a patron, Mr. Loubidos.

In 1887, he went to the Bordeaux region and took the opportunity to take part in the exhibition of the society of the Friends of the Arts of Bordeaux. The marriage of his sister Hélène to a doctor from Bordeaux, Doctor Manguin, and her recent move to the region seems to have been the reason for the painter's stay in Bordeaux. He will return to the Bordeaux region very regularly throughout his career. In Paris, his work *The Farmer's Daughters*, a large naturalist canvas, caused

a sensation. The Lyon Fine Arts Society invited him the following year to present it at its annual exhibition.

1889

For his last participation in the French Artists Exhibition, he presented two paintings, one of which, *The Val of Forge* (Gironde), earned him a silver medal. The other, *The Avenue de la Défense in Puteaux* is currently kept in the Gaudin Museum in Puteaux.

1890

From 1890 onwards, a number of things will change with regard to the number of paintings he presents at the various exhibitions and the multiplicity of his exhibition venues.

From January onwards, he sends works to Bordeaux, Nantes and Rheims for the exhibitions of the societies of the Friends of the Arts.

Equally important, he presents himself for the first time at the Salon of the National Society of Fine Arts with nine paintings. Alain Wolff, a critic for Figaro Salon, finds his batch of paintings a little pretentious and questions the artist: *I would like to recommend to Mr. Durst a little wisdom in his submissions. Nine at a time of the same colouring, of equal quality, are not a necessity.*

His imposing participation is nevertheless appreciated and he is rewarded with a Bronze medal for *In the shade of the apple trees* (Hens).

1891-1894

He continues his French tour of exhibitions (Bordeaux, Nantes, Paris) where he mainly presents Normandy landscapes, from the Caux valley and others from the Escoussans valley in the Bordeaux region. He also unveils landscapes of Provence that inspired him during a stay in Marseille and near Toulon. During these years, he also exhibited in Angers and Bayonne (1891).

1894-1899

Durst continues to exhibit every year in Bordeaux and occasionally in Lyon, Nantes and Reims. The number of works he presents at each exhibition is always impressive. In 1897, he appointed a commission to examine the works exhibited at the Salon of the National Society of Fine Arts, under the chairmanship of Jean Béraud.

In 1898, although the sale of his paintings was not a necessity for living, he applied for the purchase of one of his works, *Turkeys, Setting Sun*, by the commission for the purchase of Salon works by the State. It was retained by the commission and was deposited in 1899 at the French Embassy in London. After numerous correspondences with the French Embassy in London, it turns out that since 1950 this painting is no longer listed.

1900-1902

In 1900, he took part in the Universal Exhibition where he showed a beautiful *Peasant woman in the sun*.

He became friends with the Czech painter Kupka, who had just moved into the house next door to his own. The two painters shared a love of nature and more particularly impressionist landscapes.

1902-1907

He made many trips and stays in the Dieppe region from which he brought back many sketches and studies recorded in artists' notebooks.

A friend of Bonnat's since his time at the rue Bassano workshop, the master introduced him to the President of the Republic, Mr Loubet, who named him a Knight of the Legion of Honor in 1902. Throughout his years, he continued to divide his life between his mansion in Puteaux and his house in St Vaast of Equiqueville in Lower Normandy.

In 1903, he once again applied for the purchase of one of his works presented at the Salon, under the impetus of Clémenceau, then Minister of the Interior. The commission selected *The Autumn Snows*, which has since been kept at the Musée dit des Augustins in Toulouse.

Two years later, his Turkeys are once again causing a sensation. The State bought him the work *Turkeys in the Grass*, which is now kept at the Musée La Piscine in Roubaix.

1908-1910

In 1908, Durst took part in the Salon of the National Society of Fine Arts with only five paintings. *The Lighthouse of Corbière (Jersey)*, with a very different style and writing in its artistic production, attracts the attention of the commission and after its purchase, it is deposited at the Town Hall of Puteaux.

In 1909, another work entitled *Escoussans, Gironde*, was purchased by the State and was deposited in 1909 at the Saumur Castle Museum.

1914-1919

In this period of war, like many artists, he only exhibited in 1914 and 1919 at the only two Salons organised. There he still offers his orchards and brook yards of Normandy. But during the war, while remaining faithful to the aesthetics and themes of his painting, he endeavoured to paint the difficulties of food replenishment experienced by the Parisian population. Thus in 1915, he painted two paintings with evocative titles: *Sheep with parquet flooring in Bois de Boulogne for supplies, Oct. 1915* and *Beef oxen on Bagatelle lawn for provisioning, Oct. 1915*. The first is kept by the artist's family, the second was bought at the Salon by the city of Paris. The second entered the collections of the FMAC (municipal contemporary art fund) of the City of Paris.

Auguste Durst seems to have been very touched by this difficult supply situation during the war. He himself, during and after the war, found himself in an uncomfortable financial situation.

From the end of the war he no longer exhibited. His very last participation in an exhibition dates back to 1924, when he presented in Bordeaux, on the occasion of the Salon de la Société des Amis des Arts, a final landscape of his beloved Normandy, *A landscape of St Vaast of Équiqueville*. He passed away in 1930 in his private mansion, leaving his three children his entire studio collection as a legacy. Auguste Durst's house was sold around the 1950s.