



ALFRED SISLEY

(Paris 1839–1899 Moret-sur-Loing)

Autour de la forêt, juin. Circa 1885.

Oil on canvas.

Signed lower right: Sisley. Titled on the reverse on the stretcher.

54 x 72,7 cm.

We would like to thank the Comité Sisley, Brame & Lorenceau, for confirming the authenticity of the painting, Paris, 2 May 2019. Provenance: - Jean-Baptiste Faure, Paris. - Durand-Ruel, Paris, bought from the above on 1 March 1900. - Halstead. - Matthiesen Ltd, London. - Private collection, Switzerland, bought at the above gallery and by descent to the present owner. Exhibitions: - Paris 1912, Exposition d'Art moderne, Galerie Les Arts, Paris, June - July 1912,

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no. 9. - Bremen 1914, Internationale Ausstellung, Kunsthalle Bremen, 1 February - 31 March, no. 313 (with ill.) (label on the reverse). Literature: Daulte, François: Alfred Sisley, Catalogue Raisonné de l'oeuvre peint, Paris, 1959, no. 593 (with ill.). Alfred Sisley was born in Paris in 1839 as the son of a successful English businessman. He was sent by his parents for business training in London, where he came into contact with works by major English landscape painters such as William Turner and John Constable. In 1862 he returned to Paris with the desire to become a painter and began his artistic education. He met Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Frédéric Bazille. With them, he began to paint outdoors and adopted the Impressionist manner of painting over the years. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 brought a tragic turn of events for Alfred Sisley. The destruction of his studio in Bougival near Paris meant the loss of his previous oeuvre. To make matters worse, his father fell ill and the family business additionally failed, causing the family's loss of nearly all of their fortune and the financial support they had hitherto been able to provide for Sisley's livelihood. At that time Sisley was in London, where he made the acquaintance of art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel, who became his main patron. As a founding member of the Impressionist group, Sisley took part in the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874 with six paintings. He participated in a total of four of the group's eight exhibitions, last exhibiting in 1882 with 27 paintings. From the late 1870s onward, the artist produced landscape paintings in the region around Paris, Marly, Bougival and Louveciennes that clearly indicate the influence of Claude Monet. These depict scenes of streets and squares of small towns, rivers, and canals at different times of the day and year, paying special attention to the vegetation and the movement of water and clouds. A difficult period began for the Impressionists at the end of the 1870s. They were temporarily abandoned by Paul Durand-Ruel, their main dealer. Monet and Sisley decided to follow Renoir's example and to present their works again at the Salon in 1879 instead of taking part in the fourth Impressionist exhibition. In 1880 they were attacked by their friend Émile Zola in three articles (Le Naturalisme au Salon, Le Voltaire, 18-22 June 1880). While acknowledging the importance of Impressionism,

he suggested that the painters failed to create masterpieces that would survive the passage of time. This caused many of the Impressionists to reorientate themselves. Monet, Pissarro and Renoir became influenced by aspects of Japanese and classical art, and later also by the Pointillists. Alfred Sisley, however, remained unswervingly committed to the Impressionist program, yet he also accomplished technical improvements to his style. His brushwork became even looser and his rendering of reflections of light in colour became more differentiated. His landscapes gained even more depth, incorporating varied brush techniques for the foreground, middle ground and background. These techniques are beautifully reflected in our summer landscape, with passages of energetic hatching in the foreground set against calmer, more tempered middle-ground brushstrokes before a relatively static, flat background. The backgrounds of his paintings often consist of a stretch of sky that was very important to Sisley, who maintained it was the invariable starting point of his works. In this respect, Alfred Sisley is considered, alongside Claude Monet, as perhaps the most consistent of the Impressionist painters — one who was swayed by neither financial nor ideational difficulties. From 1883 to 1889, Sisley lived in Moret near the forest of Fontainebleau, the surroundings of which he captured in a series of landscape paintings. Sisley cherished the beauty and tranquility of the region, which became an important source of inspiration for the artist. From that time onward, the artist slowly gained some financial security through the sale of his paintings. For the subject of present work, "Autour de la Foret", executed in June 1885, Sisley chose the edge of the forest on a bright summer's day with a nearly cloudless sky that effuses the landscape with intense sunlight. The entire scene is bathed in a glow of warm light. In "Autour de la Foret", Sisley captures the shimmering effects of early summer on the surrounding area of the forest. A haystack rests in the foreground. This motif appears in multiple landscapes by the artist, as well as repeatedly in works by other painters of the period, such as those by Vincent van Gogh, Camille Pissarro, and in the famous series by Claude Monet. While he received great admiration from his fellow painters during his lifetime, Sisley was rejected by art critics. He fought to the last for

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his cause, even as he increasingly suffered from depression. Both he and his wife developed cancer. After she passed away, he wrote a friend that he would fight until the very end. He died of throat cancer, in poor circumstances, on 29 January 1899. Shortly after his death, the value of his works skyrocketed. Although he himself had only ever received a few hundred francs for his landscapes, one of the pictures of the "Flood at Port-Marly" had already fetched 43,000 francs by 1900. Today, his paintings are ranked amongst the masterpieces of Impressionist painting, presented in numerous international exhibitions and held in the collections of many major museums. Respected by his contemporaries, Sisley was the harmonious, cautious, poetic Impressionist, described by Van Gogh in a letter to his brother in 1888 as "the most sensitive and tactful of the Impressionists," and at the same time an "uncompromising talent". "Sisley [. . .] est un maître égal aux plus grands" Monet on Sisley 1 "Un Cézanne est un moment de l'artiste tandis qu'un Sisley est un moment de la nature" Matisse on Sisley 2 1 Letter from Monet to Geffroy, 29 January 1899. 2 Henri Matisse, *Écrits et propos sur l'art*, Paris 1972, p. 44.

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