



ALFRED STEVENS (1823-1906)

The Connoisseur

Initialed with the artist's monogram, lower left, "AS"

oil on panel

8 7/8 x 6 7/8 in. (14 1/2 x 12 7/8 x 1 7/8 in.)

22.54 x 17.46 cm (36.83 x 32.7 x 4.76 cm)

1877

48141

PROVENANCE:

Private Collection, France

Private Collection, London

EXHIBITION:

Brussels, Belgium, Cercle Royal Artistique et Littéraire de Bruxelles, *Centenaire du Cercle*, 1947

Alfred E'mile-Le'opold Stevens was born in Brussels on May 11, 1823 into a prominent artistic family. Stevens had two brothers, Joseph Edouard, who was an animal painter, and Arthur, who was an art critic and keeper of the painting gallery of Leopold II. His father's collection included several paintings by Delacroix. Stevens studied in Brussels with Francois-Joseph Navez from 1840-1844, and later in Paris in the studio of Camille Roqueplan. While in Paris, Stevens studied under Ingres at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. After returning to Brussels in 1849, he submitted four historical paintings to the Brussels Salon of 1851. In 1853 Stevens made his debut at the Pris solon with three realist paintings, one of which was purchased by the French State. However, by 1855 he had turned towards depicting genre scenes and discovered his forte in painting beautiful, elegantly attied women in fashionable interiors, engaged in reading, in performing their toilette or other activities. By the 1860's Stevens was extremely successful. Among his notable patrons was King Leopold I of Belgium. He had an interest in Japonisme, and his pictures frequently contained artifacts from the Far East, an area of collectiong in whech he pioneered. Stevens married Marie Blanc in 1858, and together the couple had four children. Their eldest son, Le'opold became a portrait, genre and landscape painter.

Stevens quickly became a part of Paris' avant-garde circles, befriending Manet, Degas, Morisot and Baudelaire. He was admired as an important recorder of the bourgeois and aristocratic levels of a la vie moderne and also portrayed all the glitter and elegance of late Victorian times. In 1867, Stevens' career reached a climax at the Exposition Universelle. There he showed eighteen paintings, won a first-class medal and was promoted to Officer of the Legion of Honor. In 1880, due to a bronchial infection, he spent some time at Saint-Adresse, on the Normandy coast. His students, many of them women, included the celebrated actress Sarah Bernhardt, of whom Stevens did several portraits. In 1887, he was elected a member of the Royal Society of British Artists and also exhibited at Suffolk Street. Stevens' celebrity was so enduring that, in 1900, towards the end of his career, he was given a one-man retrospective exhibition at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the first living artist to be so honored. He was honored posthumously in Brussels and Antwerp in 1907.

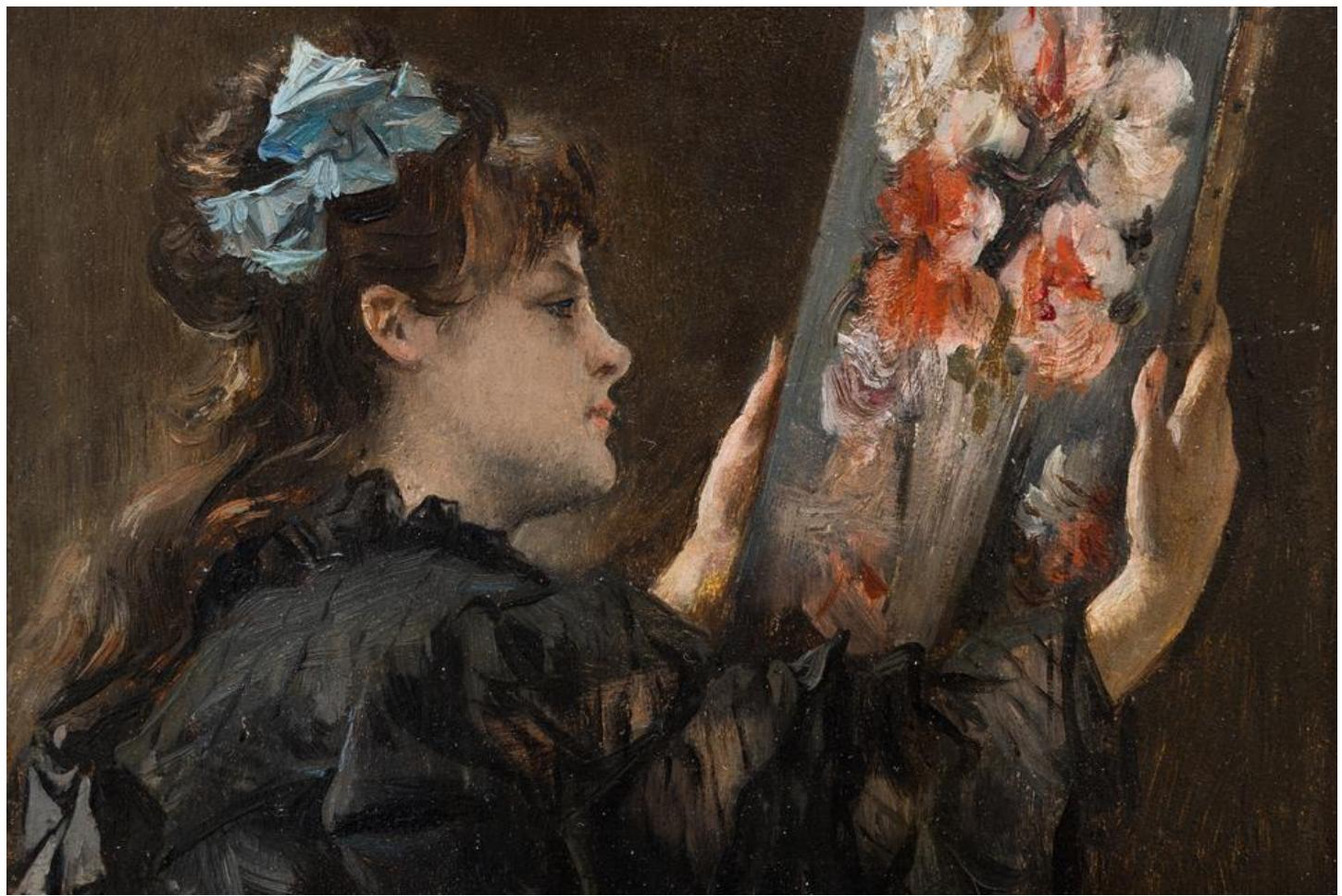
Stevens died in 1906 in Paris, leaving behind an oeuvre which gracefully captures the elegant modern interiors, enlivened with women's and children's figures, all painted with subtle color harmonies.

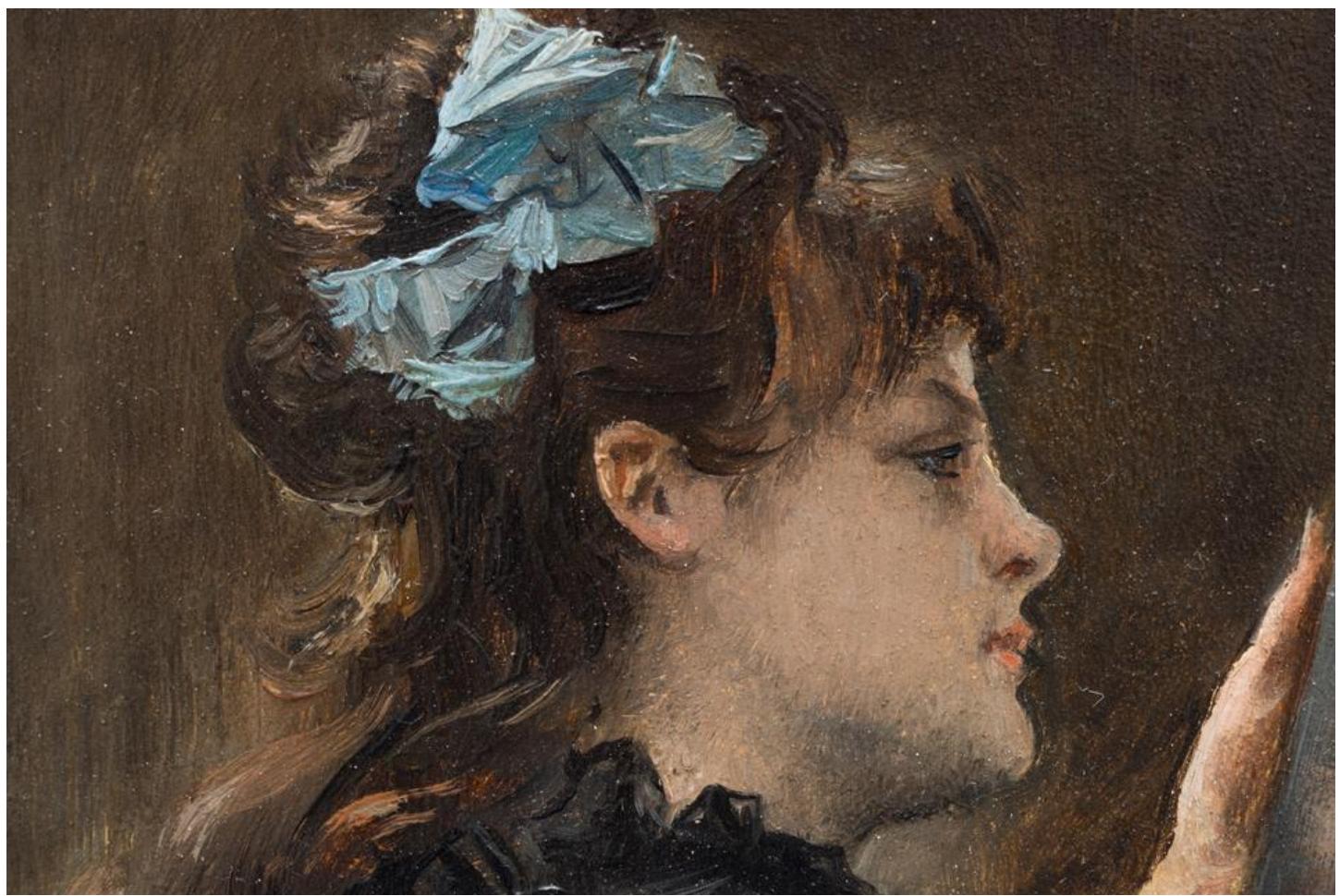
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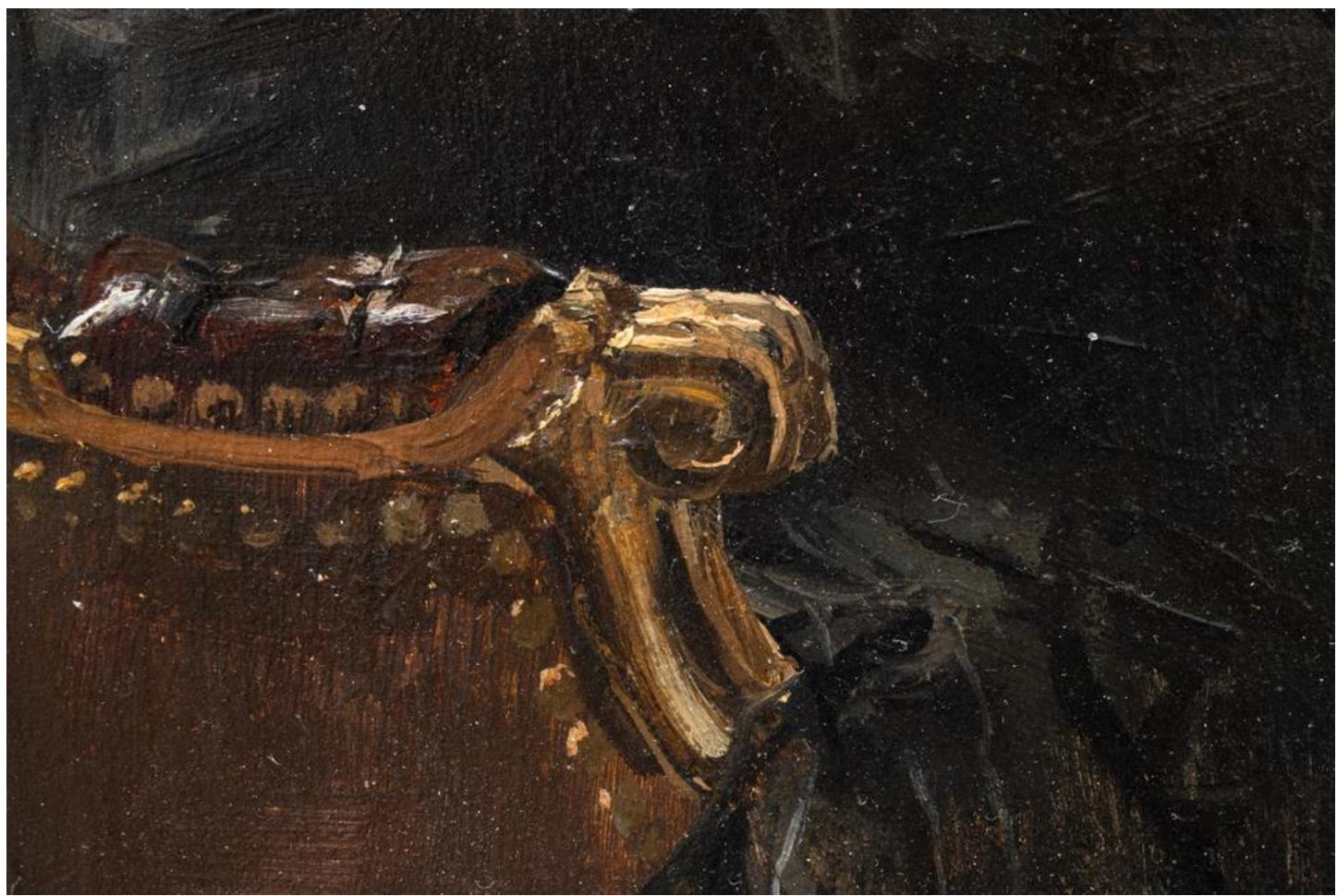


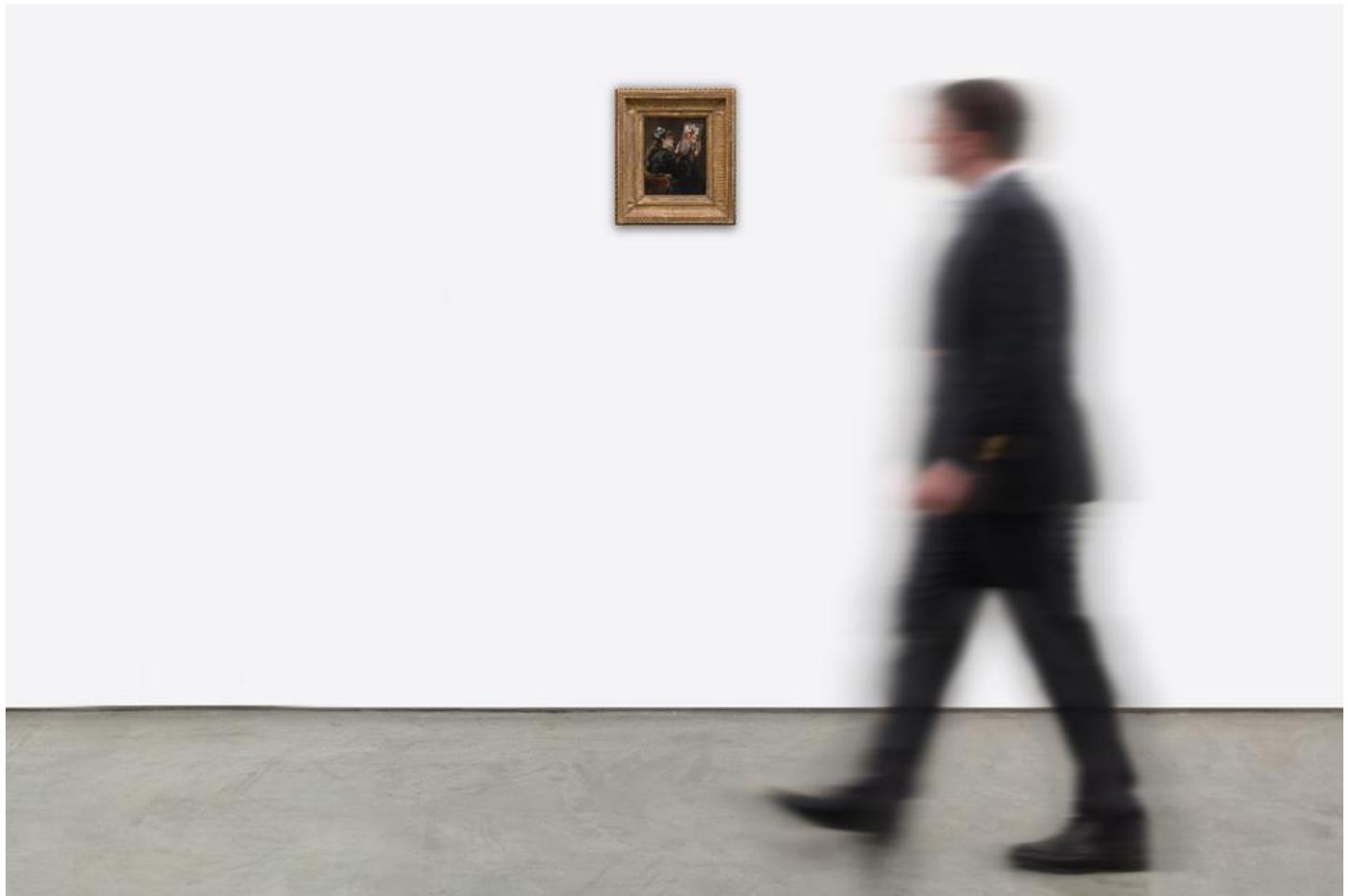












Cercle Royal Artistique et Littéraire
de Bruxelles 1947

Exposition : Centenaire du Cercle
Livre : à l'atelier
Auteur : A. Stevens
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