

RICHARD GREEN

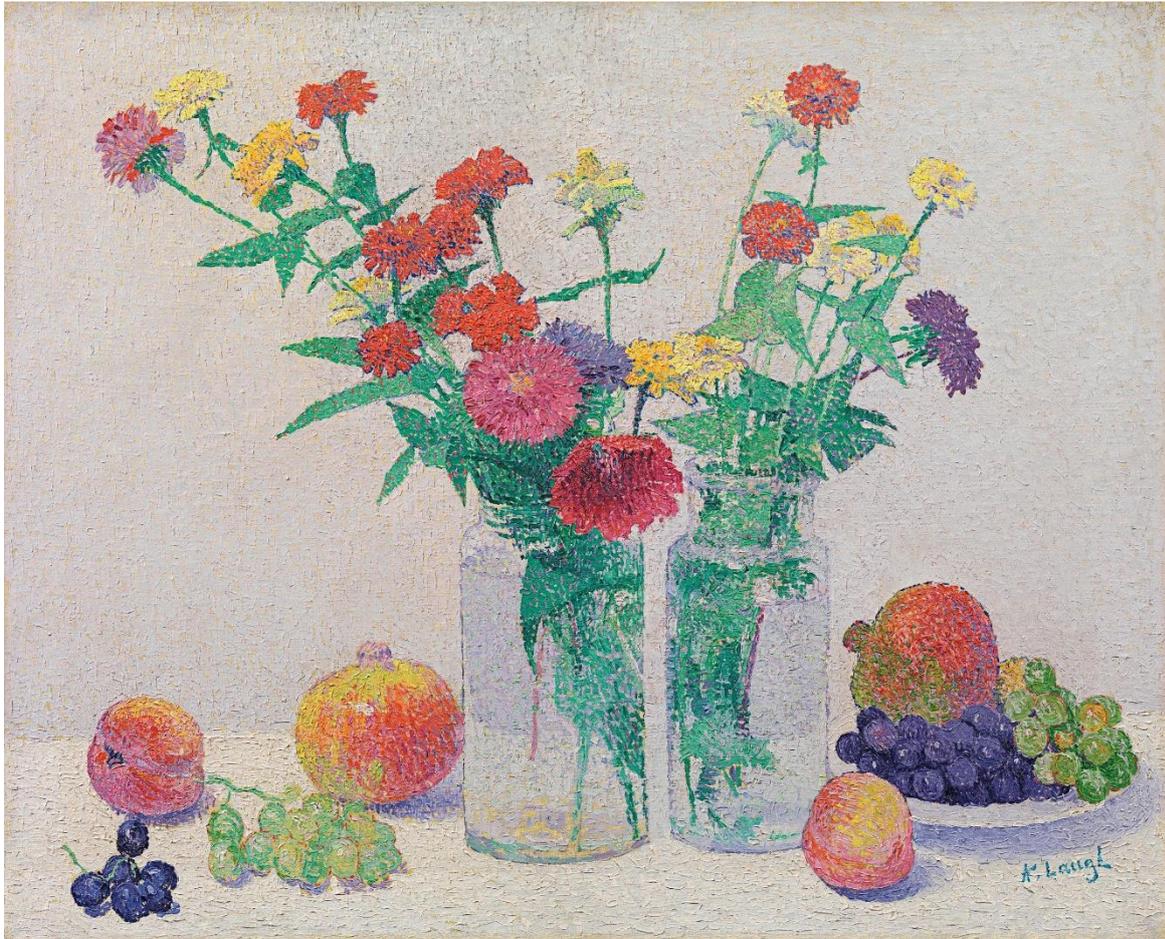
FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

ACHILLE LAUGÉ

Arzens 1861 - 1944 Cailhau

Ref: BX 192

*Nature morte aux grenades*



Stamped with signature lower right: A. Laugé

Oil on canvas: 23½ x 28¾ in / 59.7 x 73 cm

Frame Size: 32 x 37 in / 81.3 x 94 cm

Painted circa 1893-95

In a Louis XV style pastel frame



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## *Provenance:*

Dr Victor Gaujon, Carcassonne, France, offered by the artist as a wedding gift, then by descent to his nephew and heir, Dr Paul Bertrou

## *Exhibited:*

Limoux, Musée Petiet, *Art vivant d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, Hommage à Laugé*, 5<sup>th</sup> September- 12<sup>th</sup> October 1958, no.10

Toulouse, Musée des Augustins, *Achille Laugé et ses amis Bourdelle and Maillol*, 30<sup>th</sup> May-5<sup>th</sup> October 1961, no.34

Douai, Musée de la Chartreuse, *Achille Laugé, le point, la ligne, la lumière*, 26<sup>th</sup> February-6<sup>th</sup> June 2010, no.67

Lausanne, Fondation de l'Hermitage, *Achille Laugé: le Neo-Impressionisme dans la lumière du Sud*, 24<sup>th</sup> June-30<sup>th</sup> October 2022, pp.43; 51, no.22, illus. in colour

## *Literature:*

Nicole Tamburini, *Achille Laugé, le point, la ligne, la lumière*, exh. cat., Silvana Editoriale, 2009, no.67, illus. in colour p.95, detail illus. in colour p.12

To be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of the work of Achille Laugé being prepared by Nicole Tamburini

Simply arranged across a bright white tablecloth, two bouquets of gorgeous garden flowers stand in tall transparent jars surrounded by luscious, late summer fruits: pomegranates, peaches, purple and green grapes, some piled in a small white bowl, the rest at perfectly placed intervals either side of the flowers. Offering joyful bursts of vibrant colour stretching out to the top corners of the composition, these exuberant, daisy-like flowers are most likely asters, densely blooming zinnias, or the jagged ruffles of dahlias. Each flowerhead is vivaciously individualised, demonstrating Laugé's understanding of their unique shape and structure.

The natural, seemingly artless arrangement of this modest still life preserves the brilliance of the artist's vision and the brightness of its tones, 'the vivid colours of the flowers responding to the subtly divided harmonies of the fruits.'<sup>1</sup> Their colours range from deep purple, red, orange, pink, yellow, green, set against a luminous pale lilac background that pulsates with the dynamic application of paint. Laugé's use of colour is always arresting and highly original, realistic but slightly unexpected, presenting a familiar subject afresh.

One of the most beautiful, balanced and vibrant compositions of Laugé's career, ambitious and accomplished in equal measure, this is one of the largest still lifes Laugé is known to have painted, recalling the work of Henri Fantin-Latour, such as *Asters and fruit on a table*, 1868, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. A celebration of the abundance of nature, of the land and light of the Midi, it seems fitting that the artist gave this masterpiece as a wedding present to his childhood friend, the original owner of all three paintings, Doctor Victor

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<sup>1</sup> 'Les couleurs vives des fleurs répondent aux harmonies subtilement divisées des fruits.' Nicole Tamburini, *op.cit.*, no.67, p.95.

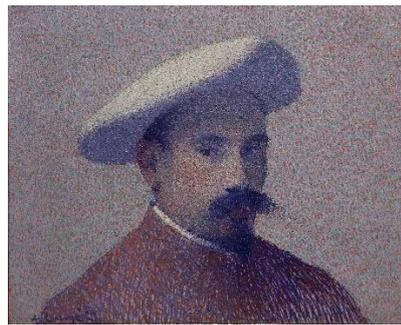
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Gaujon (1865-1933), whose portrait Laugé painted in 1895 (private collection).<sup>2</sup> The two men met and became friends at high school, renewing their mutual regard upon Laugé's return to the south from his studies in Paris. Gaujon, who created the first maternity hospital in Carcassonne,<sup>3</sup> was an important supporter of the artist's work. As well as purchasing paintings, he brought 'friends and families to be painted, as did the writer Jean Alboize (future curator of the Musée de Fontainebleau). The painter would do formal portraits during the day of people whom his friends had recommended him to, and come evening, these same friends would gather in his studio, philosophising, singing and generally passing a very agreeable time together.'<sup>4</sup>



Achille Laugé, *Vase de fleurs*, 1894  
Oil on canvas: 23 5/8 × 28 3/4 in / 60 × 73 cm  
Association des Amis du Petit Palais, Geneva  
Photograph Studio Monique Bernaz, Geneva



Achille Laugé, *Autoportrait au béret blanc*, 1895-96  
Oil on canvas: 15 3/8 × 19 1/4 in / 39 × 49 cm  
The Robert Bachmann Collection, Lisbon

## ACHILLE LAUGÉ

Arzens 1861 – 1944 Cailhau

Achille Guillaume Laugé was born in Arzens in the Aude region of southern France, at the foot of the Pyrenees. Achille was the third child of Pierre and Catherine (née Gazel), prosperous farmers who settled in the village of Cailhau near Carcassonne, where the artist spent most of his life. Laugé attended the municipal school at Cailhau, where he began to paint, followed by the Lycée de Carcassonne, where he studied drawing under Jean Jalabert (1815-1900). At his parents' request, Laugé undertook internships at pharmacies in Limoux and Carcassonne in 1877, before being apprenticed in 1878 to a pharmacist in Toulouse. While there, he attended classes at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where he met Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929), Henri Marre (1858-1927) and Henri Martin (1860-1943). The four friends decided to study at the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in Paris. Laugé arrived in the capital at the end of 1881 and registered as a pupil of Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889) at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts the following year. Here Bourdelle introduced him to Aristide Maillol (1861-1944), with whom he studied under Jean-Paul Laurens (1838-1921) from 1883, and the three remained close friends, often sharing rooms and studios in Paris to combine their scarce resources.

<sup>2</sup> With a study of flowers on the reverse. See Tamburini, no.16, p.42.

<sup>3</sup> Tamburini, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Dordi, *Achille Laugé, Neo-Impressionist 1861-1944, A brief history*, Deco Partnership, Hampshire, 2015, p.32.

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Laugé carried out his military service in the Infantry from 1885 to 1888, permitted to continue his art education in Paris provided that he return to the Babylone barracks, near Les Invalides, every evening. Though dissatisfied with the teaching at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Laugé and his friends were perfectly placed to witness avant-garde developments at the centre of the art world, in particular the second exhibition of the Salon des Artistes Indépendants of 1886, featuring George Seurat's controversial *Un dimanche après-midi à l'île de la Grande Jatte*, as a result of which the anarchist art critic, Félix Fénéon, devised the term 'neo-impressionist'.

In 1888, Laugé returned to Carcassonne, and seven years later settled in Cailhau, where he remained for the rest of his life surrounded by a small circle of friends who supported and encouraged him throughout his career. The rolling, sun-soaked landscape of Cailhau, with the snow-capped peaks of the Pyrenees rising in the distance, was the inspiration for Laugé's finest landscapes. In 1891, Laugé married Marie-Agnes Boyer, with whom he had four children, later building a family house known as *l'Alouette* on land inherited from his father. Laugé kept his Parisian contacts and exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in 1894 and at an exhibition in Toulouse the same year in the company of the Nabis and Toulouse-Lautrec. He also had several one-man shows in Paris from 1907 to 1930.

In his earlier works, Laugé is clearly influenced by Seurat. From 1888 until about 1896, he composed his pictures with small points of colour. However, he appears never entirely to have accepted Seurat's scientific approach to painting, choosing instead to concentrate on the primacy of colour rather than a strictly Pointillist approach. By the end of the nineteenth century Laugé had abandoned dots and dabs and painted his landscapes, portraits and still lifes with thin, systematically placed strokes resembling crosshatching. After 1905, Laugé applied his pigments more freely, with enlarged strokes and thick impasto that brought him closer to a traditional Impressionist technique whilst maintaining his ability to paint the translucence of southern light. Laugé was, at heart, a *plein air* painter, travelling around in his *roulotte-atelier*, a glass-sided studio on wheels, which allowed him to paint in all weathers and at all seasons. The countryside of the Languedoc was the inspiration for most of his work.

In 1916, Laugé moved into a studio in the former Palais de Justice at Alet-les-Bains, about fifteen miles from his house at Cailhau. He used floral motifs in his designs for tapestries for the Gobelins factory, notably in the elaborate borders to a set of tapestries of the *Four Seasons*, executed by Laugé 1915-19<sup>5</sup>. In 1919 Laugé was commissioned by M. Castel, Mayor of Lézignan and Député of Aude, to decorate his Château de Gailhadet, near Mirepoix. From 1926, Laugé rented a fisherman's cottage in Collioure every summer, frequently meeting Henri Martin, with whom he remained friends. During the Occupation in 1940, he retired to the University campus of Toulouse.

The work of Achille Laugé is represented in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris; the Musée Bourdelle, Paris; Musée Petiet, Limoux; the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Carcassonne; Musée Fabre, Montpellier; the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Narbonne; the Musée de Grenoble; the Petit-Palais, Geneva and the National Gallery, Washington.

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<sup>5</sup> See Nicole Tamburini, *op. cit.*, pp.114-5, no.79-82, illus. in colour.