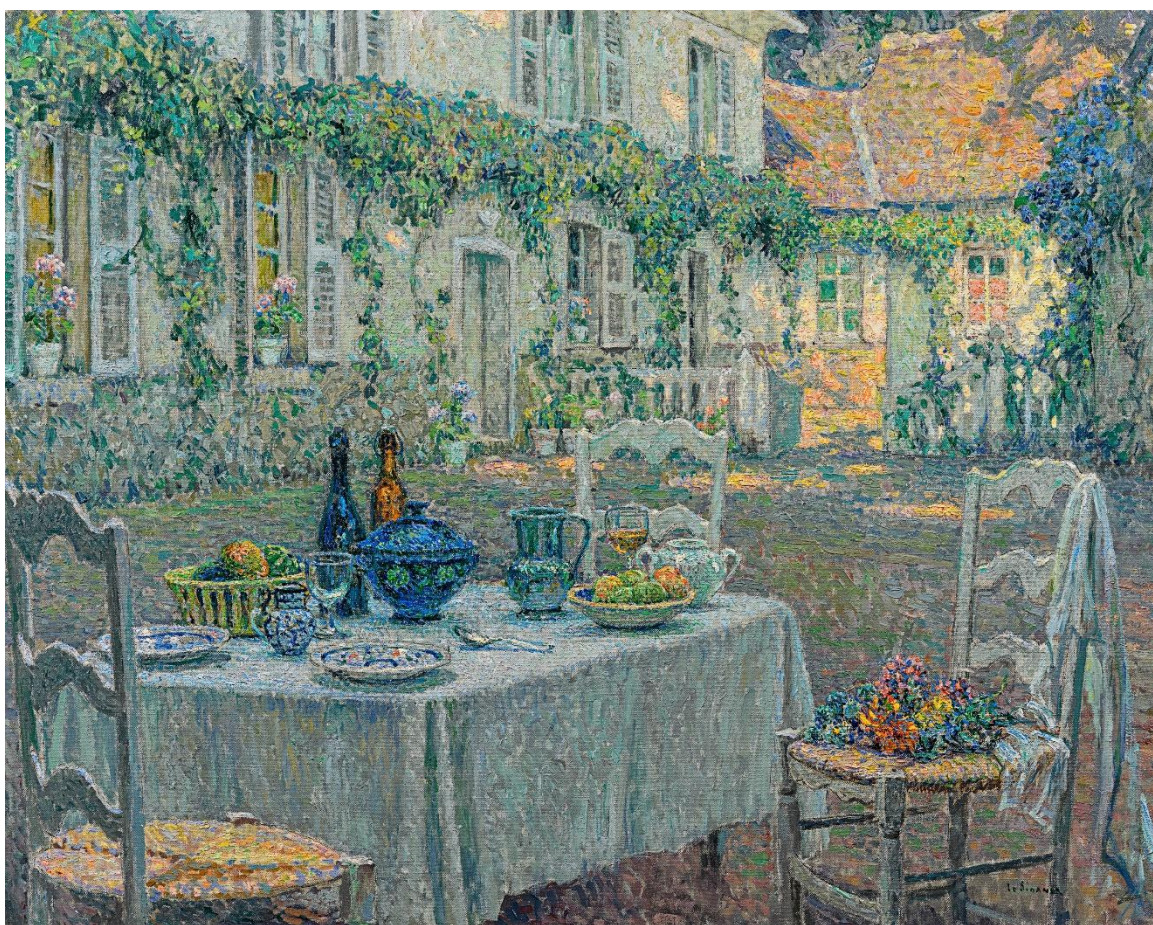


HENRI LE SIDANER

Port-Louis 1862 - 1939 Versailles

Ref: CE 109

Le déjeuner, Gerberoy



Signed lower right: *Le Sidaner*
Oil on canvas: 28 ¾ x 36 ¼ in / 73 x 92.1 cm

Painted in 1921



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Provenance:

Galerie Georges Petit, inv. no.5613 and 10682
André Tatischeff, Paris (the artist's framer and friend);
private collection, France, acquired from the above *circa* 1925
Sotheby's London, 25th June 2002, lot 128;
Richard Green, London;
private collection, Europe, 2002;
Richard Green, London, 2008;
private collection, Europe, 2009

Literature:

Vittorio Pica, *Nel Mondo delle Arti Belle*, 1923
Yann Farinaux-Le Sidaner, *Le Sidaner, l'Oeuvre peint et gravé*, Paris 1989, p.185, no.472, illus.

In 1901 Henri Le Sidaner visited Gerberoy, about six miles north-west of Beauvais in Picardy, in search of a house round which he could develop a garden. The area had been recommended to him by Rodin. Le Sidaner was enchanted by the 'old sleepy town, steeped in history and gentle nostalgia'¹, where William the Conqueror had fought his unruly son and which had been besieged in the Hundred Years' War and the sixteenth century Wars of Religion. Le Sidaner rented a small cottage which in 1910 he bought and began to enlarge, adding a garden of terraces, Italianate balustrades and pavilions, overlooking half-timbered houses, cobbled streets and the rolling countryside beyond.

The house was bitterly cold and Le Sidaner spent only one winter there, retreating otherwise to the comforts of Versailles, the South of France or elegant European cities such as Venice and London. In the summers Gerberoy was his paradise and the inspiration for many paintings depicting the house and its environs. It became as important to him as Giverny to Monet or Marquayrol to Henri Martin.

The theme of a table set for a meal in the courtyard of the house at Gerberoy was one that Le Sidaner revisited many times. He rarely painted bright sunlight, preferring the subtle tones of the 'blue hour' shortly after sunset or, as here, sunlight seen from delicious shade. Tonal affinities knit the composition together. The blue-green hues of the vines which soften the façade of the white house are picked up in the green apples on the table, the vivid blue-green of the tureen and the adjacent wine bottle. They are echoed in the shadowed tablecloth, with its interwoven grey-blue touches. Warmer tones – flitting across the chair seat, the flowers on the chair to the right and the distant outbuildings – suggest the sparkle of direct sunlight and the drowsy heat of the

¹ Farinaux-Le Sidaner, *op. cit.*, p.14.

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garden beyond. Le Sidaner uses rich, broken impasto and colour both to construct a realistic, Post-Impressionist sense of space and to revel in the sheer enjoyment of paint.

Figures rarely appear in Le Sidaner's mature work. A delightful human presence and domestic harmony is implied by the food on the table and the abandoned scarf, as if the actors have left the stage only temporarily. The poet and art critic Camille Mauclair wrote of Le Sidaner: 'He considered that the silent harmony of things is enough to evoke the presence of those who live among them. Indeed, such presences are felt throughout his works. Deserted they may be but never empty'². When this work was made, in 1921, only three years had passed since France's trauma in the First World War. Le Sidaner's celebration of family life, nature, beauty and good food chimed with the nation's desire for a tranquil future.

A pencil and watercolour study for this composition was with the Hammer Galleries, New York and is now in a private collection³.



The table in the sun in the garden, Gerberoy.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes.

² *Henri Le Sidaner*, Paris 1928, p.12.

³ Farinaux-*Le Sidaner*, *op. cit.*, p.359, no.1125, illus.

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HENRI LE SIDANER

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Henri Le Sidaner was born in Port Louis, Mauritius in 1862, the son of a shipbroker of Breton descent. At the age of ten his family moved to Dunkirk and in 1880, after the death of his father, to Paris. Le Sidaner entered the studio of Alexandre Cabanel at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1884, but was more inspired by Manet than by his master's dry academicism.

In 1889 he moved to Etaples, where he met the painters Eugène Chigot and Henri Duhem, who were to remain lifelong friends. Le Sidaner made *plein-air* paintings of Breton peasants and fishermen in a subdued palette.

In 1892 a grant allowed him to paint in Florence, Venice and Katwijk in Holland. In 1894 he settled in Paris, transferring his allegiance from the Salon to the more avant-garde Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. In this period Le Sidaner produced paintings such as the 1896 *Morning* (Musée de Dunkerque) and *Twilight* (private collection), which combine elements of Impressionist technique with Symbolist themes. That year he signed a contract with the Mancini Gallery.

In 1898 Le Sidaner turned decisively towards the highly individual style, building on the innovations of Impressionism, that would characterise his work for the rest of his life. In 1898 he went to Bruges with his lover Camille; their son Louis was born in Paris in October, although the couple was based in Bruges for another year. In 1899 they returned to Paris and Le Sidaner became one of the group of artists represented by Galeries Georges Petit, which would give him financial stability and remain his dealer until 1930.

Le Sidaner, keen to buy a country house around which he could develop a garden, was advised by Rodin to visit the terrain near Beauvais. In 1901 he rented a cottage in the picturesque town of Gerberoy (Seine et Oise). He bought it in 1904 and in 1910 greatly enlarged the house, creating a paradisiacal garden which provided the inspiration for many of his later paintings. Le Sidaner developed a poetic style of Post-Impressionism which explores the qualities of light and objects through harmonies and counterpoint of subtle tones. After 1900 he rarely included figures in his paintings, implying human presence through his interest in depicting a community of ancient houses, or a table set for tea. Le Sidaner's works, with their evocation of mood and emotional engagement with landscape, have affinities with the music of 'Impressionist' composers such as Claude Debussy.

Le Sidaner travelled in search of new motifs, wintering in Venice or London to escape the freezing cold of Gerberoy. From 1914 his family was based at a comfortable house in Versailles and summered in Gerberoy. From around 1920 his paintings employ a lighter palette and sparer,

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more dreamlike compositions. He was awarded the Légion d'Honneur in 1913 and the First Prize at the 1925 Pittsburgh International. Henri Le Sidaner died in Paris in 1939.

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