

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



PAUL SIGNAC

1863 - Paris - 1935

Bayeux, la Cathédrale Notre Dame

Watercolour over pencil with white heightening on beige paper; executed c.1922.

Signed in pencil lower right: *P. Signac*

280 x 380 mm

PROVENANCE: Adalbert Colsman, Langenberg – Thence by descent

Signac made his first attempts as a watercolourist in 1892 and found a new means of expression, which he was to take to a high level of perfection and which was to occupy a major place in his work.

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As an impatient traveller and a keen sailor, Signac henceforth travelled with only his pencil, a box of watercolours, a notebook, or a few sheets of paper in his pockets, leaving the the execution of the painted canvases until his return. In 1913 he wrote that a watercolourist first records *the elements of beauty, the images of life that pass before him* before embarking on selective processes in the studio.¹ He was captivated by the freedom of a technique in which the hand is *a mere organ of transmission subordinated to the brain and the eye.*² This provided the solution to a self-imposed challenge,³ namely to convey a constantly changing universe – of moving water, shifting light, shimmering reflections and eddying winds.

The present sheet was executed c.1922. It depicts a view of Bayeux, an old Episcopal town in the Bessin area in Normandy, situated only a few kilometres from the coast of the English Channel. It preserves one of France's finest cathedrals, a masterpiece of Norman Gothic art. The cathedral *Notre Dame* was consecrated in 1077 by Bishop Odo of Conteville, in the presence of his brother William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy and King of England. Following serious fire damage, the cathedral was rebuilt in Gothic style in the 13th century. The construction of the central tower began in the 15th century. The town is also the home of the famous *Bayeux Tapestry*, which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England. The present view of the cathedral is from the Aure River looking northwest.

A variant of the present watercolour, probably executed at the same time, is in the James T. Dyke Collection, Arkansas (fig. 1).⁴



Fig. 1: *Bayeux, la cathédrale*, c.1922,
watercolour and pencil, 265 x 398 mm.
James T. Dyke Collection, Arkansas

¹ P. Signac, preface to the catalogue of the H. Person exhibition, Paris, Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, February 1913.

² P. Signac, *Jongkind*, Paris, 1927, p. 71.

³ Cited after Marina Ferretti Bocquillon, in exhib. cat., op. cit., Little Rock 2000, p. 15.

⁴ See exhib. cat., Arkansas, op. cit., p. 70, no. 59, illus.