

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



ALFRED STEVENS

1823 Brussels – Paris 1906

Plage à la marée basse animée de personnages

Oil on canvas.

Signed lower right: *A Stevens*

27 x 40.5 cm

PROVENANCE: J. H. Carpes, France – Jean-Luc Baroni, London – Private collection, London

Alfred Stevens spent most of his artistic career in France. In 1844, he moved to Paris to train as a painter. At the École des Beaux-Arts one of his teachers was Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Stevens went back to Brussels long enough to make his artistic debut at the Brussels Salon in 1851, but returned to Paris the following year, remaining there for the rest of his life.

Stevens became during the 1860s an immensely successful painter and was acclaimed for his paintings of elegant modern women. His exhibits at the Salons in Paris and Brussels attracted favourable critical attention and were sought after by collectors. Close friends with James McNeill Whistler, James Tissot, and Edgar Degas, Stevens was admired by Édouard Manet, who recognized in his brilliant painting a certain proximity with his own, in particular in the use of grays and blacks.

In the 1880s, Stevens's work underwent a temporary change of style.

For health reasons, he was obliged to spend his summers by the sea. The artist was glad to agree when the Paris dealer Georges Petit offered him fifty thousand francs to finance his vacation in exchange for the paintings Stevens produced during that time. This deal, which lasted for three years, resulted in the sea becoming an important subject for him, and over the rest of his career, he painted hundreds of views of popular resorts along the Normandy coast and the Midi in the south.¹

Stevens was never considered an Impressionist himself, but many of the artistic elements that characterized the work of contemporaries such as his friends Manet and Degas would appear in his works.

Edgar Degas captured the scenic coastline in over forty pastels during his stay on the Norman coast in July and August 1869. He precisely observed and reproduced the landscape and weather conditions, most probably painting *en plein air*.

In our delicate depiction of a beach scene, the sun makes its way through the overcast sky and lets the sea shimmer in a warm light; a few isolated walkers enjoy this quiet moment on a fairly empty beach. The influence of Degas's landscapes on the late *Ceuvre* of Stevens is evident in this painting [Fig. 1, 2].

¹ *Mers du Nord et Côte d'Azur*, in: Christian Lefebvre, *Alfred Stevens -1823-1906*, Paris, 2006, p. 156 ff.



Fig.1: Edgar Degas, *Plage à marée basse*, 1869
Pastel on paper, 280 x 320 mm
Private collection



Fig.2: Edgar Degas, *Paysage marin avec plage à marée basse*, c.1869
Pastel on paper, 156 x 305 mm
Albertina, Vienna
(inv. no. 24123)