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Albert Baertsoen

ALBERT BAERTSOEN (1866–1922)

Albert Baertsoen (1866–1922) was born into a wealthy family of liberal Ghent textile manufacturers. Thanks to his parents' financial wealth and social relations, as a young artist he had every opportunity to develop. This combination of an original artistic talent and great financial wealth was decisive for his entire career.

THE EARLY YEARS

Growing up in a wealthy environment, Albert Baertsoen had every opportunity to develop his various talents. It must have been clear to his parents early on that his interests did not lie in business. In the arts the young man aspired to a career in both the fine arts and music. Parallel to his Latin humanities studies at the Ottogracht state high school he entered the Conservatory of Music in Ghent in 1886 and obtained a second prize for singing; Baertsoen was to remain passionate about music all his life. He received his artistic training through private lessons from Gustave Den Duyts and Jean Delvin, then teacher and later director of the Ghent Academy of Fine Arts, who would become Baertsoen's soul mate. In the period 1886–88, he sought nature and painted in the region of Dendermonde. Baertsoen maintained contacts there with the main figures of the Dendermonde school, the plein-air painters Isidore Meyers and Jacques Rosseels.

Brickyard at Noon, Summer, 1887

Oil on Canvas

Belfius Art Collection

The comparison of his earliest landscapes shows how Baertsoen evolved in just a few years from a searching debutant to a noted plein-air painter, who combined ambition - working with relatively large formats for his age - with convincing landscape compositions. The kinship with the artists of the Dendermonde School is unmistakable, not only in the choice

of subjects (animated farm views and village corners) but because of the somewhat blurred touch also in the technical field. Soon, as in this view of a brickyard, he took a more progressive path: the colour becomes clear, the brushwork free, almost pre-impressionistic. The painting was one of the highlights of *L'Essor's* exhibition in 1888.

View of the Surroundings of Dendermonde, 1887

Oil on canvas

MSK Ghent. Bequest of Fernand Scribe

In his early twenties, Baertsoen spent a long time in the Scheldt region. There he got to know Jacques Rosseels and Isidore Meyers, director and teacher respectively of the Dendermonde Academy of Fine Arts. They were the main figures of the Dendermonde School, whose oeuvre is characterised by a tempered light and a melancholy

view of the landscape, expressed through the use of grey tones. Their influence on Baertsoen was considerable. Baertsoen's *View of the Surroundings of Dendermonde* shows the Dender River just before it flows into the city. Muted, green-grey tints predominate in the painting.

WATER

Although Baertsoen would become successful as a painter of urban landscapes, water is the most omnipresent element in his oeuvre. From the seascapes over views on the River Scheldt to the canals in Ghent, Bruges, Dixmude, Zeeland and elsewhere, Baertsoen was always fascinated by water. The North Sea and the Scheldt form the thread running through his oeuvre before the turn of the century. Baertsoen also literally lived in the vicinity of water. His studio was situated at the confluence of the Coupure and an arm of the River Lys, the family villa in Ostend offered him wide-open views of the North Sea, and on his father's yacht *May Queen* he explored the Scheldt up to its mouth. In 1897 Baertsoen took his own houseboat *Fafner* into use. Man is mostly absent from his view of the water, but man-made elements are constantly popping up, in the form of bridges, jetties, boats or mooring posts.

On the Lower Scheldt.

Last Rays, Fishermen Moored, 1888

Oil on canvas
Dirk Acke Collection

The work that meant Baertsoen's definitive breakthrough was the impressive *On the Lower Scheldt. Last Rays, Fishermen Moored* from 1888. With great mastery, he evokes the moment when the day loses its plea and twilight sets in. The filtered light of the last rays of the sun, the endless horizon of the Scheldt estuary and

the anonymous, bent fishermen in their sloop are a translation of the indefinable melancholy that takes hold of Baertsoen when he is confronted with elements such as end and transition. The canvas made a great impression on the jury of the Antwerp Salon of 1888, who awarded it the gold medal.

Beach Corner, Grey Weather, 1888

Oil, pastel and sand on canvas
MSK Ghent. Bequest of Fernand Scribe

On the Belgian coast Baertsoen used the family villa on the seafront in fashionable Ostend as his base of operations. Following the example of James Ensor, a good acquaintance of his, he sought out the beach outside the busiest hours when he could let nature speak for itself. This work is undeniably painted on the spot; it

has a grained surface texture because the wind has blown the sand into the wet oil paint during the painting process. A better proof of a plein air painting is hardly conceivable. Seascapes, dune views, breakwaters, palisades and cloud studies repeatedly appear in his work until the mid-1890s.

Mr Albert Baertsoen has just finished one of the most poetic pages ever inspired by the heavy and majestic waters of the River Scheldt.

— Achille Chainaye, 1888

THE HINTERLAND

During the period 1890–95, Baertsoen chose his themes in the hinterland of the Belgian coast. In these paintings, we can follow the artist closely as he moves further and further away from the coastline. First come the dune views, followed by the fishing village Mariakerke-on-Sea and then connecting roads to hamlets behind the coastline. From 1893 onwards, he worked further into the West Coast on a series of townscapes, among others in Dixmude and Nieuwpoort. In these (and later) works, Baertsoen wanted above all to depict a general feeling, more than a specific place. The independence and symbolic impact, even the symbolism of the location are translated into often general titles. Well-known monuments and landmarks are missing from the image, or are assigned a second-class position. What is striking in the townscapes of, for example, Nieuwpoort, is the unusual approach of reality. He deliberately structures these canvases with insignificant elements: a long white wall, the side of a church, a ditch in the street.

Evening on the Dune, Mariakerke-on-Sea, 1892

Oil on canvas

Private collection

In 1892 Baertsoen painted the dune village of Mariakerke-on-Sea. For this panoramic view, he chose the moment when the evening sun illuminates the gable tops and the tower of Our Lady of the Dunes Church and its surroundings are covered by shadows. Baertsoen had etched the church earlier, probably after the example of his Ostend friend

James Ensor, who had made the etching *Grand View of Mariakerke* in 1887. When, around 1894, the entire site was threatened with demolition as a result of the expansion of Ostend, Ensor successfully took on the defence of the church of the dunes. It was restored and later protected as a monument.

In Front of the Church in Flanders, Autumn, 1894

Oil on canvas

Private collection

Around 1896 Baertsoen invited his friend Emile Claus to spend some August days with him in the holiday house Villa Jeanne in Nieuwpoort. As an advantage he mentioned the gravel roads that made cities like Dunkirk, Dixmude and Ostend accessible by bicycle. Nieuwpoort itself, in addition to a coast and a channel, also offered a historical town

centre which Baertsoen, with his idiosyncratic framing and high horizon, captured on plate and canvas. Much more than the historical architecture or the women in black hooded cloaks, a ditch along the road or the shaded and leafy ground between the trees in front of the Church of Our Lady caught his eye.

The White Wall, Flanders, 1893

Oil on canvas

Brussels, Archives et Musée de la Littérature

In 1893–95, Baertsoen frequently worked in Nieuwpoort. Near the town, an enigmatic, long white wall caught his attention, which he immortalised on canvas. Georges Rodenbach discovered *The White Wall, Flanders* at the Salon of the *Société Nationale* of 1894 and was deeply impressed by

it. After the exhibition, the work was given a prominent place in his home in Paris. Rodenbach wrote to Baertsoen that he loved the work as if it were ‘a friend with whom I live; I adore it, being a precious landscape in which my eyes like to wander.’

Emile Claus (1849–1924), Girls in the Field, 1892

Albert Baertsoen (1866–1922), Corner of a Pond, Snow, ca. 1892

Pastel on paper

MSK Gent. Bequest of Fernand Scribe

The pastels by Baertsoen and those by his friend Emile Claus show two opposing artistic natures. In his drawing, Claus focuses on the two girls in the foreground. The scorching summer light blurs everything around them. A nervous technique of sketchily applied dashes enhances the effect of an impressionistic snapshot. By the

shadows falling from the picture plane, he seeks contact with his audience. Baertsoen’s world, on the other hand, stands alone; the space is more strictly demarcated and his pastels contain his introspective personality: the feeling that the artist had experienced and translated into an atmospheric synthesis.

INTERNATIONAL RENOWN

After Baertsoen's success at official exhibitions at home and abroad early in his career, museum success was not long in coming. With the acquisition in 1894 of the painting *Old Canal in Flanders*, the then Musée du Luxembourg in Paris (today's Musée d'Orsay) made the first of three purchases that perpetuated the general appreciation for Baertsoen's work in European exhibition life. The artist established his reputation primarily with views of his native city of Ghent that were highly regarded by the public and the press, well-considered representations that nevertheless retained the character of an instantaneous impression. The honorary title of 'le peintre de Gand' (the painter of Ghent), which he was then awarded, did not only refer to the fact that he was the most important modern artist in the city. The majority of his contemporaries considered Baertsoen to be the most authentic Belgian interpreter of the urban landscape.

Snow morning in Flanders.

Rope-Makers on the Ramparts, 1895

Oil on canvas
MSK Ghent

This work was one of the successful paintings from the series of winter city landscapes that Baertsoen set up from 1895 onwards. Not only was it acquired that same year for the Ghent museum, but he also exhibited it frequently in the period 1895–97. Among Belgian artists, Baertsoen was until 1914 one of the most sought-after exhibitors on the

international exhibition circuit, both in more conservative and extremely progressive circles in Berlin, Brussels, Munich, London, Paris and Vienna. As the demand for his participation in exhibitions increased, he sent more and more graphic works which were as highly regarded by the art critics as his paintings.

Ghent in the Evening, 1903

Oil on canvas
Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium

Just as in the painting *On the Lower Scheldt. Last Rays, Fishermen Moored* from 1888, Baertsoen expressed in his cityscapes the unfathomable tristesse he experienced in landscapes which he associated with ending and transition. He saw with regret how the old, patinated cities in Flanders had to make way for modernity. Art critics soon picked up on

this characteristic of his art and increasingly linked him to the theme of 'the dead city'. Baertsoen was seen as the artistic counterpart to Georges Rodenbach and Maurice Maeterlinck. In Baertsoen's urban universe, it is not the people, but the silence, the walls, the water, the boats and an all-embracing atmosphere that prevail and appeal to the viewer.

The Thaw in Ghent, 1902

Oil on canvas
Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Baertsoen was a man of importance in the Parisian art world. He regularly took part in the Salons of the *Société Nationale* and was associated with the renowned Galerie Georges Petit. His work was held in high regard by collectors such as the immensely rich perfume manufacturer Jacques Rouché. At the Salon of 1904,

Baertsoen presented two spectacular paintings: *The Thaw in Ghent*, and *Ghent in the Evening*. Rouché and Léonce Bénédicté, the director of the Musée du Luxembourg, disputed the coveted *The Thaw in Ghent*. The work eventually went to the museum, but Rouché was equally pleased with his purchase of *Ghent in the Evening*.

The Quai des Ménétriers in Bruges, September Sky, ca. 1905

Oil on canvas
Museum Brugge, Groeningemuseum

Although Bruges had long attracted visitors, the extinct medieval trading metropolis gained popularity after the publication in 1892 of Georges Rodenbach's symbolist novel *Bruges-la-Morte*. The reflections in the wrinkle-free canal water naturally invited contemplation of appearance and reality. This literal reflection is omnipresent in the work of Baertsoen's French colleague Henri Le Sidaner, who stayed in

Bruges for a year. Baertsoen's own framing with a high horizon also emphasises the surface of the water, both in Bruges at the oft-painted bend in the quai des Ménétriers and in his depiction of a neoclassical warehouse along the quai aux Tilleuls in Ghent. The main compositional elements in the painting are related to the work of Willem Witsen, who, however, included more detail in the depiction.

The Luizengevecht in the Snow, 1911

Oil on canvas

Liège, Musée des Beaux-Arts / La Boverie

Among the many obscure locations in Baertsoen's work, we find a number of working-class neighbourhoods in Ghent, such as the Veergrep and Luizengevecht, a stone's throw from his own studio. Baertsoen observed in a detached way, not so much literally, by working from the other side of the river at the Bijlokekaai, as figuratively, by leaving out

the actual impoverished. When the Liège museum acquired this work, the socialist newspaper *Vooruit* called the canvas 'dark, dirty, grim and deadly, and on which no man in the world can find art'. Baertsoen's painting leans towards so-called intimism, which aesthetically depicts tranquil, everyday banality.

The Old Courtyard of Laarne Castle, 1911

Oil on canvas

RES Collection, courtesy Galerie St-John

Baertsoen loved old cities steeped in history, whose individuality he knew how to portray at a pivotal moment in their existence. He was also concerned with the fate of historical monuments which, if not threatened with demolition, were not always restored in a judicious manner.

Baertsoen's protests against the banal reconstruction of the Castle of the Counts in Ghent are well known. Around 1910, the castle in Laarne was also in danger of being demolished. This was probably the reason why Baertsoen often went to the site, each time to depict it from a different angle.

A painting at the Musée du Luxembourg is the greatest success a Belgian artist can dream of and you have to earn it ten times to get it.

– Thomas Vinçotte, 1894

M. Albert Baertsoen's canvases are not designed to captivate the attention of the holiday public, for they are lacking in all the essentials required to attract the crowd.

– Gabriel Mourey, 1898

I know of canvases that have been redone ten times in order to obtain the first impression felt, by tightening the form more and more while retaining a broad and free texture.

– Octave Maus, 1905

It is quite possible that someone has painted similar beautiful nights; however, more striking ones have never been made.

– Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert, 1910

INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPES

From the end of 1906 to the beginning of 1908, when architect Georges Hobé built a new house with a studio for him in Ghent, Baertsoen and his second wife Claire Neujean stayed in Liège. His artistic production there was entirely prevaled to landscapes where factories dominate the horizon. In all, Baertsoen produced some 35 works in oil paint and a series of drawings and etchings in Liège and its surroundings. Most are quick, unsigned impressions in small format, but his magnum opus from this Liège period, the large *Industrial Landscape under the Snow*, was enthusiastically received when it was exhibited at the *Annual exhibition* at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh in 1908. Although these paintings differ greatly from the rest of his oeuvre, critics saw a similar spirit in them: location-independence (it could be a view of any industrial basin), a lived-in, very personal vision of the landscape, and a tranquil atmosphere in which no man can be seen, but the human hand is emphatically present.

*The whole work is fierce, with a tragic beauty
of winter and death.*

– Camille Lemonnier, 1907

THE NETHERLANDS

Baertsoen felt strongly attracted to the Netherlands. He sometimes rented a holiday home in Katwijk and closely followed the Dutch art scene. He was friends with Jan Toorop and Philip Zilcken, among others. In 1892, Baertsoen organised an exhibition of the Dutch *Etsclub* (Etching Society) in Ghent. That same year, he exhibited together with Emile Claus and Constantin Meunier in the famous Pulchri Studio in The Hague. In order to be able to work freely in Zeeland, Baertsoen had the *Fafner* built in 1897, a luxurious houseboat on which he spent the summers in Vlissingen, Veere and Middelburg. There Baertsoen made works in a strikingly bright colour scheme, very different in tone from the paintings he produced in and around the Flemish cities. The city canals of Dordrecht and Amsterdam also inspired him. Just before the First World War, he extensively portrayed the outer harbour of Terneuzen in drawings, etchings and works in oil paint.

Summer in Middelburg (I), 1902

Oil on canvas
Private collection

Baertsoen's works from Zeeland are strikingly different from the rest of his oeuvre by their colouring. A plausible explanation for those unusually bright, even garish colours lies in the context in which the paintings were created. The artist made them during his summer trips to Zeeland, relaxing in his houseboat on which he also invited friends. The colours

- 'rich and striking' according to Fernand Khnopff - are typical of the motif: not so much the traditional Zeeland costume, which did not interest Baertsoen at all, but the painted facades, orange roofs and colourful boats. Baertsoen allowed the colour contrasts to shine through, resulting in an unusual, summery vitality.

Kromboomssloot in Amsterdam (I & II), 1901

Etching
Brussels, KBR - Royal Library

Baertsoen loved the old cities in Zeeland and Holland. In 1901, the Kromboomssloot attracted his attention, a narrow curved canal in the centre of Amsterdam. Based on preparatory drawings, he made two etchings of the canal, in which light and dark parts contrast strikingly and the water is like a

mirror of the deserted quay. Both etchings are among the most successful of his entire oeuvre. When Baertsoen exhibited them for the first time in Amsterdam in 1903, the critics praised his technical prowess and the highly individual way in which he managed to evoke an oppressive atmosphere.

Yesterday, walkers were curiously looking at a boat-house, the 'Fafner Gent' moored at the Saint-Leonard quay. This floating house, which came out of the shipyards of Mr. Jabon, in Ombret, belongs to a citizen of Ghent, Mr. Albert Baertsoen, who had it built according to the plans of Mr. Boulvin, the maritime engineer. The hull, entirely made of steel sheets, is 32 metres long, 4.75 metres wide and 2.90 metres high.

— *La Meuse*, 29.05.1897

THE BAERTSOEN LABORATORY

In his solo shows and the group exhibitions in which he participated, Baertsoen showed work in various techniques and in the different phases of their realisation. Finished canvases were exhibited alongside sketches in oil paint, drawings and etchings, offering the visitor an insight into his studio practice. The artist always had drawing sheets to hand, hundreds of which have been preserved and on which the subject grew in sketchy pencil lines with a rapid hand. The oil studies that he also made outdoors are gems of spontaneity and virtuosity, painted in rapid tempo, wet-on-wet. In his own words, both served to learn the motif 'by heart', as a memory training for later elaborating and enlarging the scene in various media. Throughout his career, Baertsoen remained a searching artist, who despite the success he garnered was never satisfied and invariably continued to question himself.

Grey Morning, Snow (study), ca.1892

Oil on panel
Private collection

Baertsoen's oil sketches are a particular expression of impressionist plein-air painting. From the early 1890s onward, they are characterised by a firm and opaque brushstroke, which suggests not the detail but the mass of the compositional elements. In a few strokes, he created the beginnings of the final composition,

including the final framing. Many oil studies can be associated with larger paintings. Others stand alone; after a first impression on canvas or panel, they left no further trace in his oeuvre. Interior photographs of his house show that he was very attached to them and framed them in series.

At the Quai des Tuileries, Ghent, ca.1900-05

Etching (four states)
Private collection

Also as a graphic artist, Baertsoen proved to be an artist who was not easily satisfied. The etching *At the Quai des Tuileries, Ghent*, illustrates how the final result was only achieved after a long process of research. An acid-resistant etching ground in resin or beeswax is applied to a smoothly polished plate in zinc or copper, on

which a needle can be drawn. The pull of the needle exposes the metal again. When the plate is then placed in an acid bath, the acid will erode the exposed lines. After an initial proof, an etching plate can be retouched. This process can be repeated several times. The proofs of these successive stages are called 'states'.

From my Window (Le Quai aux Tilleuls in Ghent), ca.1910

Charcoal on paper
Private collection

The prestigious acquisition by the Musée de Luxembourg in 1904 made *The Thaw in Ghent* one of Baertsoen's best-known works. Although it was painted from his first studio, which was located lower above street level, this work too could have carried the title that the artist gave to another composition in 1910: *De ma fenêtre* (From My Window). From his new home-annex-painting studio from 1907-1908, he had

a higher, privileged perspective of the area, and that view increasingly fascinated him. In contrast to early Impressionists such as Claude Monet or Camille Pissarro, who painted the sun-drenched Parisian boulevards from a similarly high perspective, Baertsoen opted rather for cold, wet scenes in which he deliberately kept recognisable monuments or well-known city silhouettes out of the picture.

Evening in the Provinces (Flanders). Small Square in Flanders, 1897

Oil on canvas
Antwerp, Collection KMSKA - Flemish Community

In Albert Baertsoen's oeuvre, we do not find any views on the Korenmarkt or the Castle of the Counts. His choice fell on 'unattractive' places, dead-end alleys and common squares. A typical example is the rue vieille des Meuniers (the Old Millers' Street) in the working-class district of Ter Platen, a part of the city that at the time still had a rural character. The street was so uninteresting that the ubiquitous

photographers and publishers of postcards stayed away. In this nameless, now vanished part of Ghent, Baertsoen turned his back on the only picturesque element in the neighbourhood, the watch tower the 'Peperbus'. After having recorded the surrounding houses in various pencil and oil studies, he painted the widely acclaimed *Evening in the Provinces (Flanders). Small Square in Flanders*.

I have to tell you that I work hopelessly slow and laborious. It is driving me crazy, because it is going from bad to worse!

– Albert Baertsoen → Jules Du Jardin, 1899

I really believe that what is becoming 'old school' is the ephemeral and easy production that is caused by both impressionism and too many exhibitions! Down with superficial things, with 'notes', and long live the strong and studied things, without pedantry, of course!

– Albert Baertsoen → Jean Delvin, 1899

Impressionism is obviously only one phase – yesterday's phase – in the constant evolution of Art.

– Albert Baertsoen → Octave Maus, 1904

This is not the way to produce works by the dozen and to feed the trade of dealers on the lookout. But the works inspired by such probity impose themselves by their definitive character. Nothing is left to improvisation.

– Octave Maus, 1905

LONDON

Baertsoen liked to sojourn in London on a regular basis. Mostly he stayed only a few days, to visit museums or exhibitions, and later also to take part in the famous exhibitions of the *International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers*. At the end of 1890, he was there for a longer period, drawing and painting. The Thames played the leading role in all the works he produced at that time. Influenced by James McNeill Whistler, he painted the London harbour, bridges and steamers looming in the fog. Baertsoen also spent the war years in London, where Emile Claus, Pierre Paulus and other Belgians fled as well. Having John Singer Sargent's studio at his disposal Baertsoen produced some fifty works during this period, in which the bridges and quays on the Thames again take centre stage. He portrayed them from unusual perspectives, in mist, in rainy weather or at dusk, giving the picture a sometimes threatening and sombre character.

London Bridge, Dusk, ca. 1915-19

Oil on canvas
Private collection

Especially during the war years, Baertsoen was intrigued by the many bridges over the Thames that were built or renovated in the nineteenth century. His field of activity was also necessarily limited to the river banks; artists could not sketch or draw freely in the street, as this was associated with espionage. Baertsoen concentrated his gaze not so much

on the motorised activity on or under the bridges, but rather on their impressive arches, pillars and supporting structures. His London gaze, for instance, is generally directed upwards, in imitation of Willem Witsen, among others. He also included the snow-covered flat-bottomed barges and dirty banks that he had painted so often at home.

Waterloo Bridge, London, 1915

Lithography
Private collection

Apart from a series of 129 etchings, Baertsoen made only five lithographs. They all date from 1915; that same year he exhibited them in London. Why he only started using the technique then is unknown. Perhaps he lacked the necessary materials and the familiar cooperation with the Van Campenhouts' print studio in Brussels.

For a gifted draughtsman such as Baertsoen, lithography was undoubtedly something natural, simply a matter of drawing with chalk on a lithographic stone. The technique lent itself very well to making dramatised views of the deserted Bankside and the monumental constructions of Hungerford Bridge and London Bridge.

How fortunate you are to have been able to get back to work without the policemen on your heels, as they are here! They make such difficulties for us in London that, in spite of all the permits, I have had to give up making any sketches. Every time there are endless talks that really take away your inspiration!

— Albert Baertsoen → Isidoor Opsomer, 1916

AN ARTIST'S FRIEND

Albert Baertsoen lived for art. He was not only concerned with developing his own oeuvre, but also fully engaged in the socio-cultural life of his time. He felt best in the company of other artists and was a true cultural networker. In Ghent or elsewhere in Belgium, in Amsterdam, Paris, Venice, London or Munich, seemingly everywhere he was involved in the establishment of art circles, the organisation of exhibitions or all kinds of other fine art initiatives. As a result, he personally knew dozens of colleagues in Belgium and abroad, and often maintained cordial relations with them. This included the exchange of smaller works, such as an etching, an oil sketch or a drawing, which were usually also provided with a dedication. Probably the first colleague with whom Baertsoen exchanged work, in 1887, was James Ensor.

The Roofs of Ghent in the Snow, 1919

Oil on canvas

Private collection

During the war years in London, the first symptoms of the chronic leukaemia that would take Baertsoen's life in 1922 became noticeable. A deteriorating health condition and the weight of the long, destructive war years made him gradually become depressed and withdrawn. In February 1919,

he wrote in his (first) last will that after his death there would be no more exhibitions of his works, he only wanted 'le silence et l'oubli' ('silence and oblivion'). Yet, after his return to Ghent, he still found the strength to get back to work and painted, in various versions *The Roofs of Ghent*.

So count me in, and long live free and independent art!

– Albert Baertsoen → Frans Hens, 1891

My work was admirably placed at the Ghent Salon, far too well, perhaps, and I know to whom I owe this honour!

– Henri Evenepoel → Albert Baertsoen, 1895

I have little regard for official exhibitions and would see them disappear without regret. The State should not be allowed to organise exhibitions; this is a task that should only be left to artists and art lovers.

– Albert Baertsoen, 1896

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Prof. Dr René Vermeir,
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and Dr Johan De Smet,
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Dr Stefan Huygebaert
Prof. Dr René Vermeir
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Albert Baertsoen website

The exhibition and the accompanying book are the result of several years of intensive research in museums, libraries, archives and private collections in Belgium and abroad. All information about Baertsoen's life and work is collected in the online catalogue raisonné www.albertbaertsoen.be, which details the provenance, bibliography and exhibition list of each of the artist's works.