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EST. 1817

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Maurice Langaskens (Ghent
1884-1946 Schaerbeek)

*Retour du labeur dans un paysage
ennigé (Return from work in a snowy
landscape)*

Signed (lower left): 'Maurice
Langaskens'

Oil on unlined canvas

25 ¼ x 39 ¾ in. (64 x 101 cm.)

Painted c.1915-17



Maurice Langaskens was a Belgian artist working between the two wars. He studied at the Royal Academy of Brussels and exhibited at the Brussels salon, producing monumental commissions and decorative works. However, in 1914 he left to join the war, where he was captured in Germany and made a prisoner of war in the camps of Sennelager, Münsterlager and Göttingen from 1915 to 1917. His experiences here meant that he turned away from the decorative Symbolism of his earlier years, and towards a more sensitive realism. While at the camps he documented the everyday life which he saw around him through studies, drawings and paintings and after returning to Belgium in 1918 showed 82 of his war works in the Gallery Sneyers. He depicted the simple life of his compatriots in a compelling and glorifying way and even during his time at the camps the studies of his fellow prisoners appear almost majestic. His compositions of country people, animals, religious scenes or winter landscapes reflect a sturdy reality and a sense of inner strength, something which he would have felt in his experiences at the camps.

This interest in scenes of everyday life is clearly indebted to genre scenes of the Northern Renaissance, particularly that of Pieter Breughel the Elder. Works such as *Hunters in the Snow*, which celebrates the stark beauty of a winter townscape, with hardy hunters returning with the fruits of their labours, silhouetted against the snow, was of clear influence on Langaskens in the present work and in many variations on this theme such as *The Village in the Snow*, *Christmas Tale* and *The Symbol of the Calvary* (Fig.1, 2 & 3).

His works show his clear interest in print-making and the hard lines in his paintings and drawings, often combined with an impasto in his oil works, reveal a graphic approach to painting. In 1920, he became a

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founding member of the group *L'Art Monumental* and worked in the same circles as some of the great Belgian artists of the 20th century, such as Jean Delville, Constant Montald, Albert Ciamberlani and Emile Fabry.



Fig. 1: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Hunters in the Snow*, 1565, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



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Fig. 2: Maurice Langaskens, *The Village in the Snow*, Colour aquatint and etching.



Fig. 3: Maurice Langaskens, *Christmas Tale*, Oil on canvas



Fig. 4: Maurice Langaskens, *The Symbol of the Cavalry*, colour etching and aquatint.