

LA ROUTE DE ROME

A ROAD TO NEW HORIZONS



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Edition Foundation Paul Delvaux, 2016

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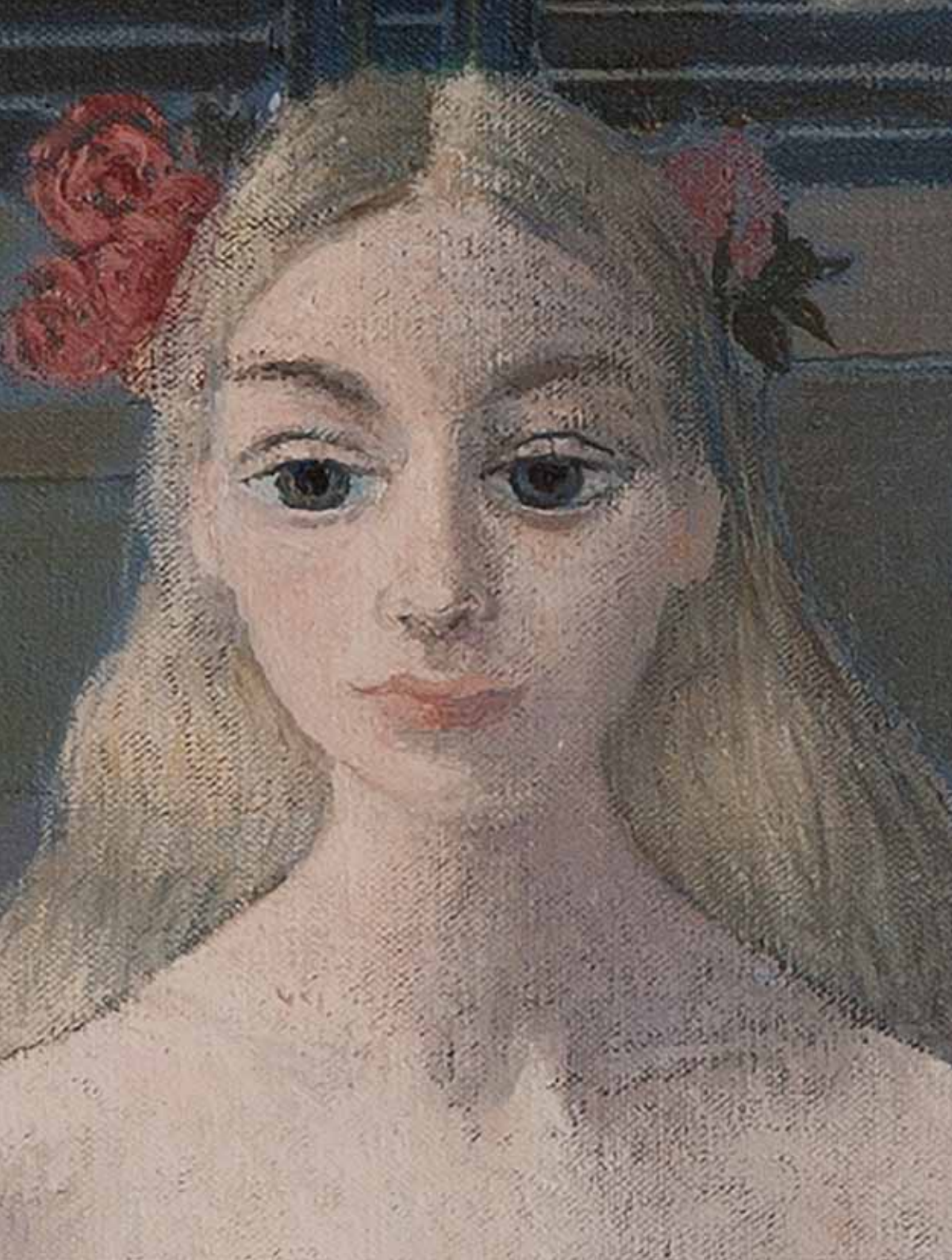
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THE PAUL DELVAUX FOUNDATION IS SELLING A PAINTING

The Paul Delvaux Foundation has decided to put up for sale an important work from its collection, *La route de Rome* (1979). This event coincides with the launch of a fundraising campaign. This appeal for sponsorship and donations is connected with the search for the financing needed to implement the numerous missions of the Foundation. Delvaux himself foresaw that certain works from the permanent collection could be sold in order to allow the Foundation and the Museum to develop. The Foundation and the Museum receive no public funding, and their daily operations are supported only by revenue generated from commercial activities. Therefore, to implement a large-scale project it is necessary to find extra funding.

Even though Delvaux worked assiduously for more than sixty years, the body of his work amounts only to some 450 paintings. The first period – that of his apprenticeship – comprises about 100 works. Dissatisfied with the results, Delvaux destroyed around fifty works from the following period. In total, only some 300 paintings are the fruit of his accomplished work. It is because of this that Delvaux's works have a limited presence in the art market, which makes the sale of the painting *La route de Rome* even more exceptional.

Martine Gautot
President of the Paul Delvaux Foundation



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LA ROUTE DE ROME

“Delvaux has made of the universe the empire of one woman,
always the same, who reigns over the grand suburbs of the heart,
where the windmills of Flanders set turning a string of pearls.”

André Breton, 1965

La route de Rome, 1979, oil on canvas, 160 x 240 cm
Collection of the Paul Delvaux Foundation, Belgium



A TIMELESS ART

The scene takes place outside in a twilight setting. Blue tones dominate and bathe the composition in a singular atmosphere that contributes to the impression of surreality dear to the artist. The luxuriant vegetation, the mountains and the water envelope the principal scene, which takes place in an agora.

This painting contains the main signifying elements peculiar to Delvaux's vision.

The **female figure** occupies an indispensable place for Delvaux. She is the integral element of the impetus of his creative process – the muse. She embodies beauty and sweetness, but remains always inaccessible. Young and slender, Delvaux's woman appears timeless. Her nudity is revealed without false modesty. She not so much

evokes sexuality as refers to a troubling aesthetic physicality. She carries with her an unfathomable mystery.

The sense of surreality is enhanced by a choice of colours that could be considered cold. Influenced by Italian painting, Delvaux nonetheless never abandoned his culture as a **man of the North**. He consciously opted for a chromatic treatment that remained faithful to the light of his immediate environment. This choice allowed him to play with even more remarkable contrasts of light, favouring particularly bodies exposed by their unreal whiteness.

Delvaux often liked to **combine architecture and nature** in the heart of his work. He himself split his time between the city

(Brussels), the Walloon countryside and the coast, and he obtained a certain pleasure from playing with these changes of ambience. His architectural studies certainly contributed to the interest he had in structures. In the same way, the influence of his reading on the classical world is equally evident. Delvaux takes direct inspiration from the codes and styles of the era. He appropriates them and distills them in a different space/time.

Eager to create a **timeless art**, Delvaux did not hesitate to combine different eras within one scene. This preference allows him to avoid ascribing a definite time period to his work. Classical allusions are juxtaposed with the spirit of modernity, evident as much in the architectural details as in the

style of dress. Toying with different temporalities, Delvaux makes figures live side by side with other characters with whom no apparent relationship can be established. Thus nude ladies exist in the same space as the "man in the street". Delvaux seeks to create a "moderating" effect. By relying on this man seen in the street, he introduces an anachronistic relationship that adds to the quality of unexpectedness with which his his enchanting world is imbued.

THE
PAUL DELVAUX
FOUNDATION
AND ITS
MUSEUM

HISTORY

The **Paul Delvaux Charitable Foundation** was established by royal order on 31 October 1979, by King Baudouin himself. Its aim is to protect, promote and elucidate the art of Paul Delvaux. As such, the Foundation is the only authority capable of issuing any authorization connected to the usage, in whatever form it may take, of the works of Paul Delvaux.

The Paul Delvaux Foundation was **created during the artist's lifetime**, and benefitted from his generosity. Not having any children, Paul Delvaux and his wife Anne-Marie de Martelaere decided to bequeath a large part of their property to the Foundation.

The Foundation has, since December 2012, been presided over by Martine Van Deun-Gautot, widow of Charles Van Deun, the founding president of the Foundation and the Museum, and above all the artist's nephew. The president is supported by a board of directors composed of figures chosen for their expertise in

one of the diverse fields of activity beneficial to the good management of the Foundation.

The Paul Delvaux Foundation possesses **the world's largest collection of works by Delvaux**, comprising more than 3000 works (oils, drawings, sketchbooks, prints, etc.) from all periods of the artist's life, comprising different techniques and revealing the diversity of subjects employed by the artist. The collection is regularly enriched with the addition of new acquisitions.

The Foundation is also the possessor of **a wealth of archive resources** which shed light on the creation of the paintings (correspondence, handwritten notes, photographs, video and audio documents, etc.). Further documentation is provided by the Delvaux library (journals, books, catalogues for exhibitions and auctions, newspapers and magazines, etc.) which continues to be supplemented to this day.



A MUSEUM IN HIS IMAGE

In 1982, the Foundation opened the **Paul Delvaux Museum** in Saint-Idesbald (Kosijde). The creation of this facility answered the artist's desire to make the collection accessible to the public. Temporary exhibitions are also arranged, and the Foundation consents to loans and submissions solicited by numerous cultural institutions both in Belgium and abroad.



Housed in a former fisherman's cottage, the museum seems to be of modest dimensions from the outside, and visitors are surprised to discover a **space of over 1000 m²** within. Recently renovated, the space invites you to discover the paintings, watercolours, drawings, sketchbooks and prints that represent the work of a painter of international renown. The museum immerses the visitor in the heart of a universe suffused with poetry, in which you will find the subjects dear to the artist – women and skeletons, neoclassical architecture and trains – which contribute to the waking dream of this globally appreciated artist. Alongside the permanent collection, there are original temporary exhibitions that open new perspectives on this complex body of work.



MISSIONS

The Foundation's missions comprise a variety of activities grouped around four axes: **Promotion** (principally through production exhibitions in Belgium and abroad); **understanding of the work** (by centralizing all the information concerning Delvaux and by initiating research projects); **conservation** (with the aim of assuring the sustain-

ability of an important heritage for future generations); and **protection** (through management of rights related to use of the work, the writings and the image of Paul Delvaux).

Under the aegis of the Foundation, an authentication committee has been created.



VISIBILITY OF PAUL DELVAUX'S ART

In the age of the Internet and interactive broadcasting, it is vital that the Foundation equips itself with tools that meet the requirements of the times.

THEMED TOURING EXHIBITIONS

The museum team intends to produce themed exhibitions that will make it possible to renew its programming each year. The plan is also to conceive exhibitions that can become touring, and thus assure greater visibility of Delvaux's work abroad.

These exhibitions are to be accompanied by the publication of reference works that require col-

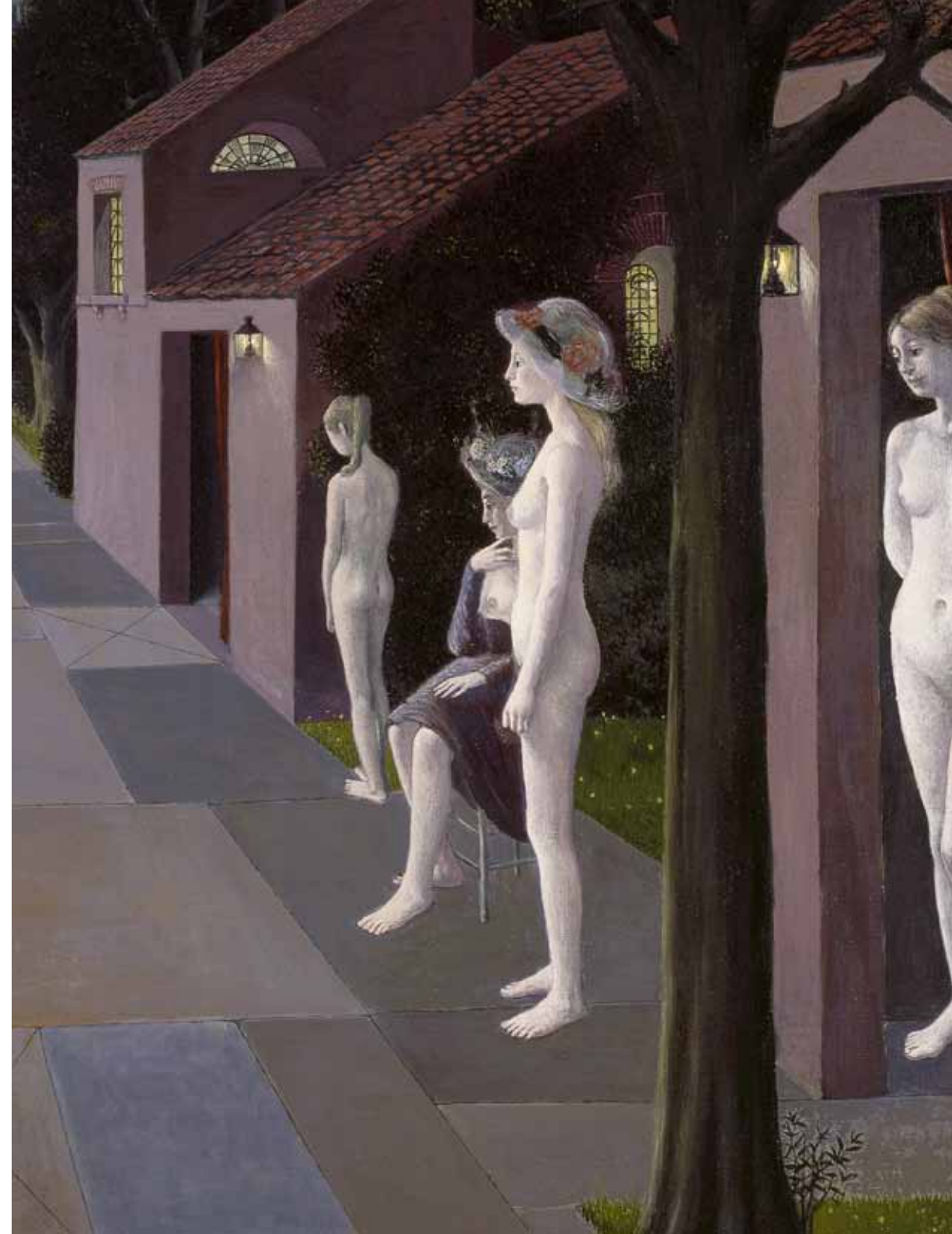
laboration with experts outside the museum.

PUBLICATION OF CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS

A catalogue raisonné is an essential tool for all amateurs and professionals wishing to take an interest in Delvaux's art. It will contribute to the diffusion of verified information and help to limit erroneous or approximative data.

Data gathered over the course of several years makes it possible to publish:

- an updated version of the catalogue raisonné of the painted works.
- a complete version of the catalogue raisonné of the printed works.



APPEAL TO DONORS



APPEAL TO DONORS

While in the beginning the funding of the Foundation and of the Museum relied on the generosity of Delvaux himself, today it is essential to be creative in order to maintain them and to implement the activities proposed. Not receiving any state subsidy, the Foundation supports its everyday operations with the revenue from the sale of admissions tickets to the Museum and the monies generated through the collection of copyright royalties.

Eager to turn a new page in its history and to take its place in the 21st century, the

Foundation hopes to develop an ambitious strategic vision that requires an injection of external funds.

Two types of project can be defined. On the one hand, there are the activities required to ensure the sustainability of our existing heritage, and on the other there are the actions undertaken to ensure Paul Delvaux enjoys greater visibility and to attract the attention of new generations. It is vital that we work simultaneously on these two plans, which depend intrinsically on one another.

WHERE DO YOUR DONATIONS GO?

To benefit from an artistic heritage it is implicit that one must manage it according to the appropriate standards, whether that be by arranging a digital inventory or implementation of preventive measures connected to the protection of that heritage.

The majority of works owned by the Foundation were bequeathed by Delvaux himself between 1982 and 1994. While,

since then, subsequent investment has been focused on the expansion and use of infrastructure, today it appears necessary to concentrate on the heritage lodged within.

The strategy conceived comprises several phases that can be undertaken concurrently according to the priorities assigned to each of the conceived goals.

DIGITIZATION PROGRAMME

Since the founding of the Delvaux Museum, the art world has evolved considerably, and greater professionalism has been imposed, particularly in the development of specialized IT tools. The digitization of data gathered patiently over many years is now a priority. This concerns both works of art and the abundant archives, all of the information from which will be centralized within a unique database.

PREVENTION PROGRAMME

The aim is to mount the works on paper in a way that takes into account objective criteria that concern, above, all, the use of antacid paper. This campaign represents a major undertaking that already involves the unmounting of all the works on paper and remounting on pH neutral backing.

RESTORATION PROGRAMME

Some works are showing signs of wear and tear, and require the attention of profes-

sional restorers. The first step is to compile an inventory, on the basis of which a gradual restoration programme will be launched of the whole collection, which will benefit from a new luster.

NEW WEBSITE

Our primary calling card, the new Paul Delvaux website is designed to become the main reference resource for the artist, gathering en masse the information available about him. This platform plays an essential role in the dissemination and promotion of Delvaux's art and should, thanks to its interactive qualities, attract the attention of a wider public.

These different programmes and the implementation of a credible website are vital to ensure the sustainability of our heritage in the long term, thus ensuring that we pass it on in the right and proper way to future generations.

À PROPOS...



PAUL DELVAUX, THE PAINTER

“All my life, I have tried to transcribe reality in order to make of it dreams of a kind, where objects, while retaining the appearance of being real, take on a poetic significance. The painting thus becomes a fiction where each object has its logical place.” **Paul Delvaux**

Paul Delvaux painting **L'Acropole**, 1966
Musée national d'Art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

A key figure in the art of the 20th century, Paul Delvaux (1897-1994) is associated with surrealism. But, while he was recognized by the movement's founding father, André Breton, Delvaux never adhered to it officially. Nonetheless, his art shares a common sensibility that is embodied in surreality. His creativity relies on his imagination alone, and he makes no efforts to curb or constrain it. His painting is guided by a freedom that no reason can or should inhibit.

Singular and strange, the captivating universe that Delvaux transcribes in his work invites us to discover his intimate thoughts. But if the painter gives us access to his inner world, he always refused to provide fixed interpretations. In fact, this approach matches his desire to keep intact the element of mystery that he produces on the canvas, but in a way that allows anyone to appropriate his work. And this invitation will not leave the public indifferent to the message of Delvaux, for whom the language of painting is universal.

During Delvaux's lifetime, several celebrities expressed their admiration for his work. The poet Paul Eluard commissioned from him *L'écho* (1943), a canvas now kept in Japan (Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Nagoya). And the greatest collectors have also demonstrated their desire to acquire this sensitive and dreamlike art. Yoko Ono

has enriched her collection with a key work, *Les phases de la lune II* (1941). In 1988, *La ville inquiète* (1941) achieved a record price at auction for the time, and was bought by a Hollywood star.

But while he enjoyed growing fame and received numerous expressions of admiration and repeated solicitations, Delvaux never altered his simple and modest way of life. Ensnared in his little Brussels house or next to the North Sea, he profited from a tranquil atmosphere conducive to his work.

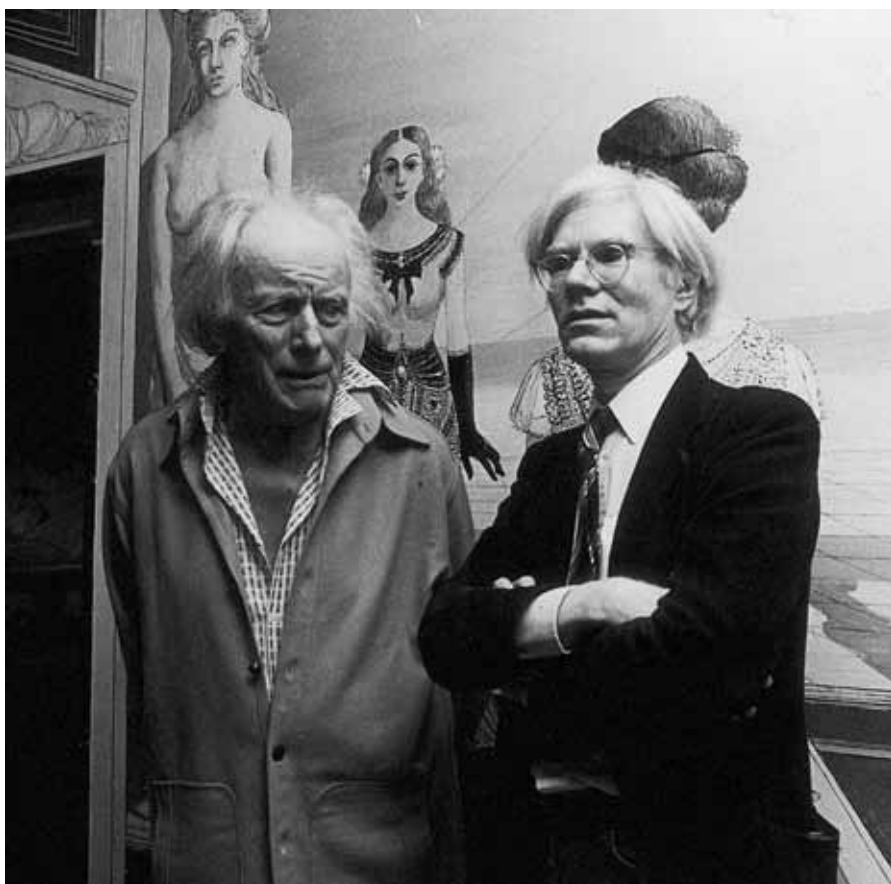
In 1979, Baron Philippe de Rothschild asked Delvaux to decorate the label for the prestigious Château Mouton Rothschild cru, a project that was implemented for the 1985 vintage.



L'écho, 1943



"The little Mariée de Furnes has found its place in my room among the things that I love. It's so soothing to let one's imagination wander in the evening through this little tranquil garden, so full of poetry!" Paola, Princesse de Belgique, 1969



In March 1982, Andy Warhol went to meet the maestro, to whom he had paid homage by creating a series of portraits. Warhol recognized in him “a great artist,

one of the most famous in the world... He was shelved with the surrealists, which is all well and good, but above all he was an exceptional painter”.

Andy Warhol, **Portrait of Paul Delvaux**, 1981

Silkscreen on linen, 114 x 114 cm (x4)

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IN THE WORLD

Today, the works of Delvaux are exhibited in the world's greatest museums:

Le cortège en dentelle, 1936

Sprengel Museum, Hannover

Femme au miroir, 1936

Le viaduc, 1963

Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

Les sirènes, 1937

City Museum of Art, Himeji

L'aurore, 1937

Guggenheim Museum, Venice

Les phases de la lune, 1939

MOMA, New York

Les phases de la lune III, 1942

La ville rouge, 1943-44

Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam

L'écho, 1943

Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Nagoya

Squelettes dans un bureau, 1944

The Israel Museum, Jérusalem

La vénus endormie, 1944

Leda, 1948

Tate Gallery, London

Pénélope, 1945

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

L'escalier II, 1948

Yokohama Museum of Art, Japan

Annonciation, 1949

La sirène, 1949

Southampton City Art Gallery, Great-Britain

Paix du soir, 1960

The Brooklyn Museum, New York

Le veilleur II, 1961

Staatliche Museen zu, Berlin

La mer est proche, 1965

City Museum of Art, Himeji

L'Acropole, 1966

Musée national d'Art moderne,

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

RECOGNITION

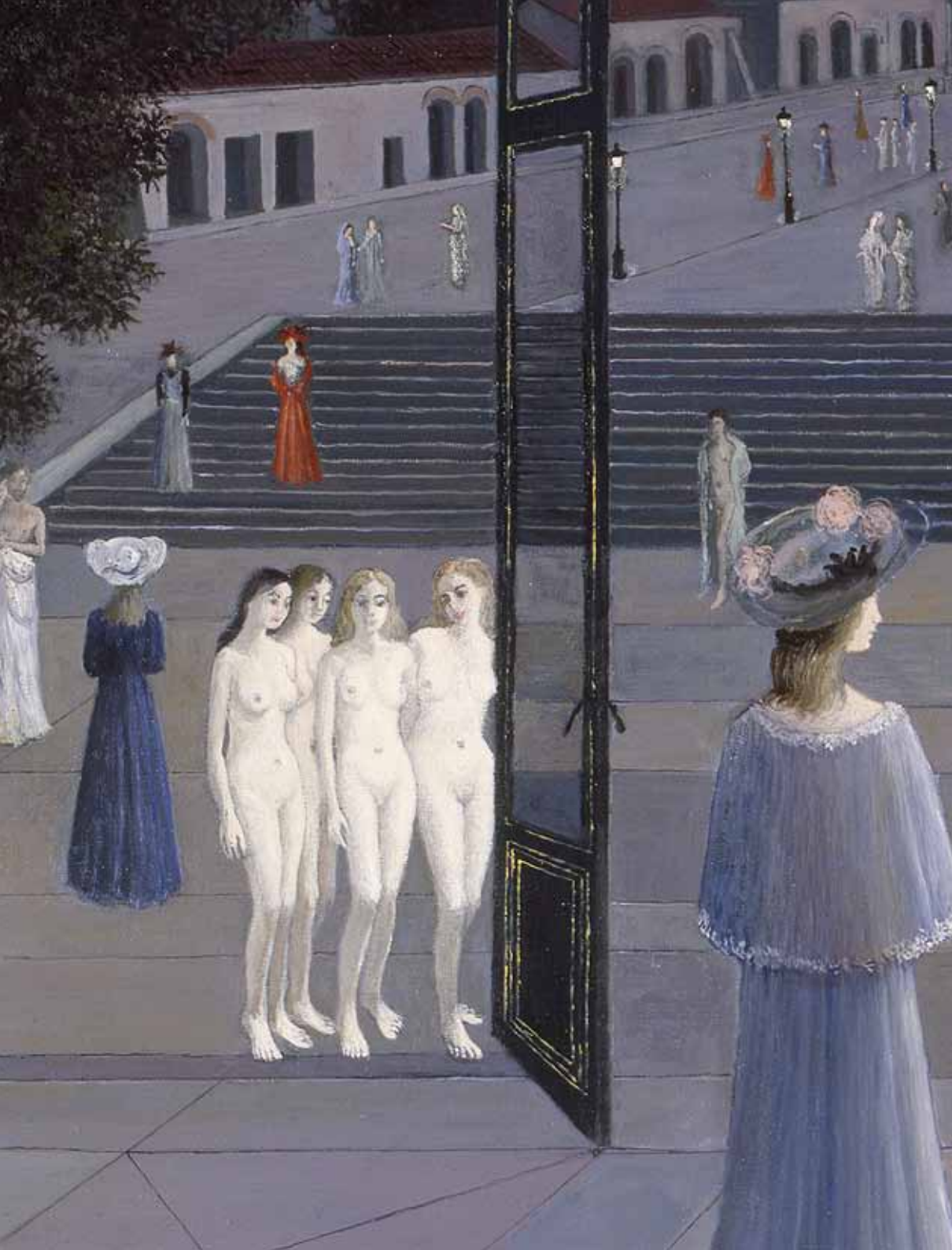
The prestigious prizes that he was awarded demonstrate the international recognition that Delvaux enjoys.

- On 3 July 1972, Paul Delvaux was made **Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters** (France).
- On 11 April 1972, Paul Delvaux received the **Rembrandt Prize of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe Foundation** (Germany).
- On 27 December 1975, Paul Delvaux received the highest French honour of the **National Order of the Legion of Honour** which conferred on him the title of Chevalier. On this occasion, the President of the French Academy, Eugène Beaudouin, told the artist: "You are an exceptional person for the rare harmony between your

artistic abilities and your intellectual gifts. (...) Your works, beyond their aesthetic enchantments, have the precious and agreeable virtue of making one think and of allowing one to dream".

- On 26 January 1979, alongside Maurice Béjart, Paul Delvaux was made **Docteur Honoris Causa** of the Free University of Brussels.
- On 3 February 1986, Paul Delvaux was made **Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters** (France).

The numerous retrospective exhibitions organized throughout the world also demonstrate how much the universe created by Delvaux has captivated the public.



A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PAINTING LA ROUTE DE ROME

Front and centre of the composition there stands a young blonde woman, naked except for a long translucent skirt. The suspended gesture that her left hand has begun to trace captures the attention, although no explanation is provided. This spectral figure is framed on all sides by other isolated women. Posed in profile, three-quarter length and even from behind, they seemed to be walled into the silence of their interiority. No communication whatsoever is established between these figures, but their carnal presence is nonetheless felt.

On the ground, the variation of paving contributes to the effect of a perspective that draws the gaze to a second plan. A high portico, suspended in space like a symbolic

gateway between two worlds, opens onto a group of four women in a row. Their nudity contrasts with the four figures situated to their right, who let us see only the backs of their dresses. A third field can be made out through another gateway, drawing a frame around two masculine figures. A man with his back turned, dressed in a black suit, faces a figure swathed in a white toga worn in the classical manner. The latter takes his place on a staircase that links the foreground to the background, which stretches across a second square occupied by several characters and surrounded by a succession of architectural structures. The effect of perspective is assured by a convergence line created by two parallel rows of streetlights.

“My dear friends visiting the Museum, I hope that you will find here a little of the joy that I myself experienced while painting, and that when you leave you will take with you a happy memory of your visit.”

Paul Delvaux, 24 may 1983

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