

Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre photographique de Maurice Denis (1896-1919)

Saskia OOMS

[Former member](#)

[PhD](#)

Thesis director

[Serge LEMOINE](#)

Additional information

Status of thesis

Defended

Defense date

07/07/2009

Thesis

Summary

- **Co-tutelle par Jan Baetens (Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven)**
- Ce manuscrit de thèse présente un catalogue raisonné des photographies du peintre Maurice Denis (1870-1943). L'étude regroupe la production photographique qui s'étend de 1896 à 1919, l'année du décès de son épouse Marthe. Le fonds photographique comprend 2689 tirages anciens et 1250 négatifs. Nous avons établi tout l'inventaire des archives photographiques de Maurice Denis, avec une datation rigoureuse des images et une identification poussée de leur sujet grâce au concours de Claire Denis, laquelle prépare le catalogue raisonné de tout l'œuvre de son grand-père. Grâce à l'invention de l'appareil Kodak par l'entreprise fondée par George Eastman en 1888, la photographie devient accessible à tous. Comme ses amis peintres, Maurice Denis utilise un appareil Kodak. Par leur familiarité avec l'estampe japonaise, Maurice Denis et ses amis se sont faits interprètes de l'esthétique de l'instantané. Les photographies de famille de Denis sont, à ce titre, mises en rapport avec celles des peintres Nabis (Vuillard, Bonnard), ou encore celles du hollandais Breitner et du belge Evenepoel. Au-delà des rapports entre la peinture et la photographie, le cas de Maurice Denis impose de considérer dans le prolongement des travaux récents sur la photographie, comme recherche sentimentale, la question de la pratique photographique comme catalyseur de remémoration.

Catalogue Raisonné of the Photographs by Maurice Denis (1896-1919)

- The doctoral thesis consists of compiling a catalogue raisonné of the photographs by the French symbolist Nabis painter Maurice Denis (1870-1943). We have reassembled, inventoried and analyzed 1250 negatives and 2689 silver prints. Denis's photographs are an enormously rich resource that will help us to understand more thoroughly the role and characteristics of his art as well as its context. The scope of this study is the period from 1896 to 1919. Like his friends in the Nabis group, Denis mainly used a Kodak camera. The compact portable box camera made photography accessible not only to artists and professionals but also to amateur photographers. This dissertation analyzes his amateur photographs in relation to his paintings. The comparison with other post-Impressionist painters who also took family photos, such as Bonnard, Vuillard, Breitner enables us to situate Denis in the history of photography. We will examine in depth the aesthetics of his photographs and the fascinating and strong affinities they have with his paintings and drawings. His photos reflect the taste for symbols, simplified forms and harmonious lines that is characteristic of his paintings. He used the camera in a variety of ways: as an amusing toy and to create images as studies for final art works. His photos were not only a compositional aid to his paintings, however, and as we will argue, they reflect many of his pictorial influences. Thanks to his familiarity with Japanese prints, he became one of the most gracious interpreters of the aesthetics of snapshot photography. This study of his photographs will contribute to the full comprehension of his art in the context of his time in a new and broader way.

Jury

- M. Baetens (Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven)
- M. Lemoine (Paris 4)
- M. Poivert (Paris 1)
- M. Streitberger (Louvain)

