



Floris Jaspers (Borgerhout (Antwerp), 1889 – Antwerp, 1965)

Seated Woman : Coquillage (Shell), 1924

Églomisé, 42.5 x 34 cm (unframed)

On the back, on the former cardboard : signed (*Jaspers*), exhibition label (PMMK, 2013),
press article (Jaspers' death), catalog cover (Campo Vlaamse Kaai, may 2013).

Exhibition : *Retrospectieve Floris Jaspers*, Ostend, PMMK, 2004, cat.112.

Sale : Campo Vlaamse Kaai, Antwerp, May 2013.

Presented at the retrospective of the Ostend Museum in 2013, *Seated Woman : Coquillage* is a very fine Floris Jaspers églomisé, one of the artist's favorite and emblematic techniques. Its subject matter and aesthetic are typical of Jaspers' works from the mid-1920s.

Floris Jaspers



An important figure of the Antwerp avant-garde, Floris Jaspers, unlike his father, Emiel (1862-1918), and his brother, Oscar (1887-1979), was not a sculptor, except on rare occasions, but a painter. He trained at the Antwerp Academy (1900-1909), then at the Antwerp Higher Institute of Fine Arts (1909-1914), where he was a student of landscape painter Franz Courtens (1854-1943), who inspired his first landscapes and seascapes. At the same time, he studied music, which allowed him, in the company of his brother, to earn a living as a cellist in theaters and music halls in Antwerp.

Two artists marked the beginnings of Floris Jaspers. The first, Rik Wouters (1882-1916), whose work he discovered in 1914 at the exhibition of *L'Art contemporain / Kunst van Heden* (Contemporary Art), inspired his first Fauvist period until 1918. The second, poet and critic Paul Van Ostaijen (1896-1928), encouraged him until his death by dedicating several articles to him or by commissioning illustrations for his works. But Van Ostaijen above all introduced him to the international artistic avant-gardes. It was also around Van Ostaijen that, from 1917 on, a group of Antwerp artists came together: the Jaspers brothers, painter Paul Joosten (1889-1960) and designer Jos Léonard (1892-1957) formed the first Belgian modernist circle : *De bond zonder gezegeld papier* (The federation without stamped paper). In a desire for fusion and experimentation, Floris Jaspers explored at the beginning of the 1920s the possibilities offered by Cubism, Abstraction, Constructivism and Expressionism which he claimed to be a part of (he also used themes close to the painters of the Second School of Laethem-Saint-Martin). Following the example of German painter Heinrich Campendonk (1889-1957), whom Van

Ostaijen introduced to him, in 1923, Jaspers began to paint églomisés¹, a technique that would run throughout his career, with the figure of the Harlequin as a recurring motif. Floris Jaspers also participated in the activities of various Belgian avant-garde magazines and circles (*Le Centaure*, *Sélection*) and maintained links with European modernist circles. In the years following the First World War, Floris Jaspers found himself at the heart of the Belgian and international avant-garde.

In the 1930s, Floris Jaspers' art calmed down. He then painted landscapes, seascapes and portraits. He also participated in the revival of monumental art with his tapestry cartoons for the universal exhibitions in Paris (1937) and New York (1938). He was then influenced by the art of Picasso at the end of the 1940s, while the 1950s were marked by his enthusiasm for Congo, which he discovered during three stays between 1951 and 1957. He then painted numerous friezes of stylized African women, which reached their peak with a 40-meter wall frieze for the Congo pavilion at the Universal Exhibition in Brussels in 1958.

Seated Woman : Coquillage (Shell)

In the first half of the 1920s, Floris Jaspers painted several nudes (fig.1). In these works, the bodies are simplified thanks to the contributions of Cubism. The works from the mid-1920s are described by the critic Jean Buyck as « gedisciplineerd cubisme »². Many figures from this period are constructed with a red line (fig.2), while the construction of the body and the facial features are simplified (fig.3). We find all these elements in our painting.

Our painting must have been painted in 1924³. That year, Jaspers exhibited many works at the *Kunst van het heden* salon at the Antwerp *Stadsfeestzaal*. Among other things, he presented several port scenes, a subject that interested him at the time (fig.4)⁴. Our painting represents a naked young girl on the beach with the sea in the background with a port entrance marked by a lighthouse and a boat (fig.5).

¹ This popular traditional technique was rediscovered in Murnau by Munich expressionist artists (Münter, Jawlensky, Kandinsky).

² BUYCK, 1990, n°36. Buyck compares this manner to that of the painter Lionel Feiniger.

³ Date given in the catalogue of the Floris Jaspers retrospective (Ostend, PMMK, 2004).

⁴ About ports, see : FREDERICQ (Louise), *Floris Jaspers, Achterglasschilderijen – Peintures sous-verre*, p.74.

Two other paintings from 1924 can be compared to our painting : *Sailor with flower* and *Aquarium* (fig.6). In all three paintings, Jaspers uses the same type of composition (seated figure in the foreground on the right), a simplified body and a port or sea background. Note that there is also a drawing preparing our painting (fig.7).

The title "*coquillage*" (shell) evokes the shells engraved in the foreground but also without a doubt this naked woman whose general shape and color also evoke a shell.

Our painting was exhibited at the Floris Jaspers retrospective at the Ostend Museum (PMMK) in 2004 (fig.8). It is also reproduced in the catalogue. It was subsequently sold by the Campo Vlaamse Kaai auction house in Antwerp in May 2013 (sold for 55 880 euro). On the back of the painting we find the cover of the catalogue which reproduced our *Coquillage* (fig.9).

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Illustrations

In the text: photograph of Floris Jaspers.

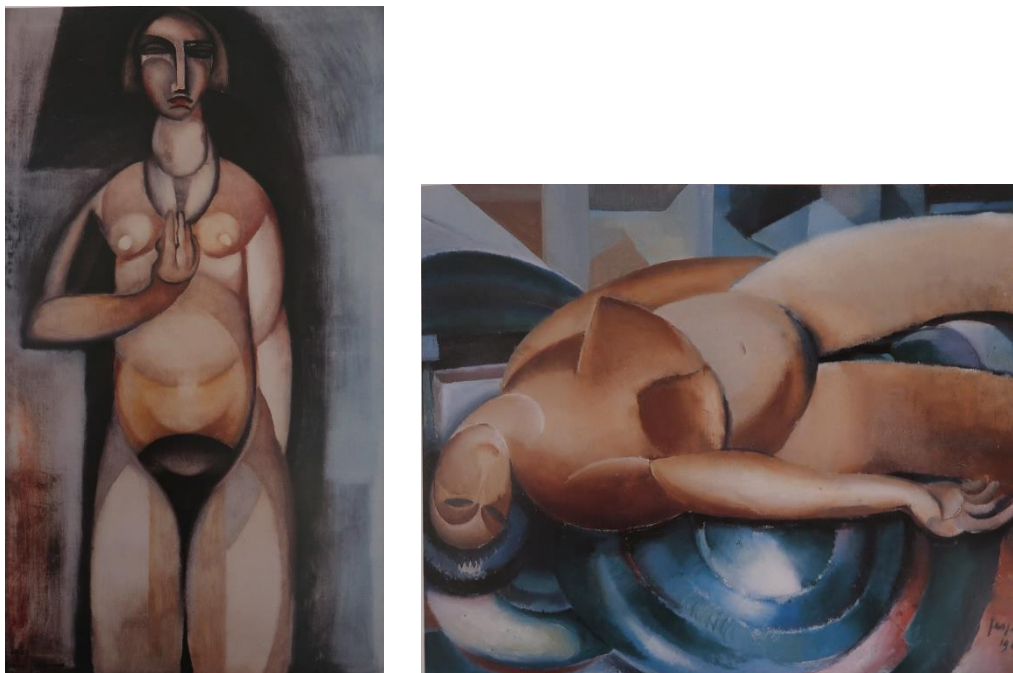


Fig.1 : Floris Jaspers, *Standing Nude*, 1921 / *Reclining Nude*, 1922, private coll.



Fig.2 : Floris Jaspers, *Adieu, églomisé*, private coll.

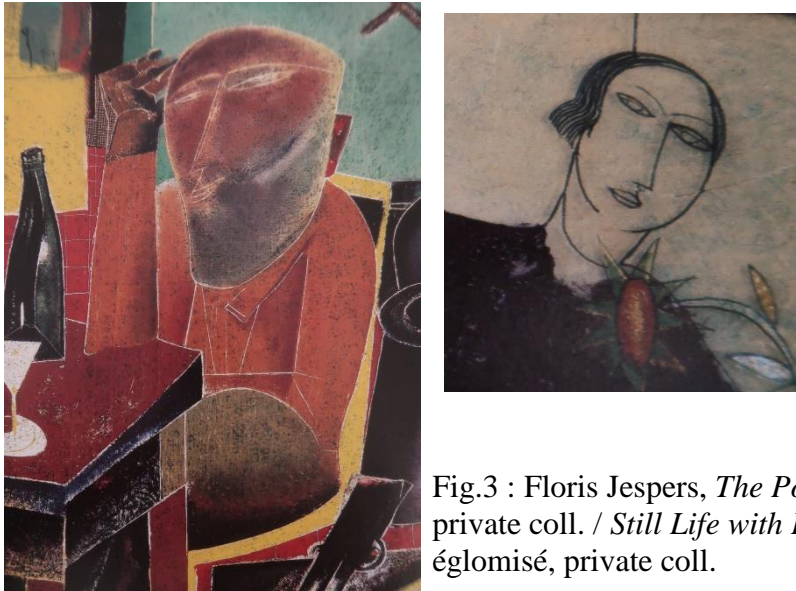


Fig.3 : Floris Jaspers, *The Poacher* (detail), 1925, églomisé, private coll. / *Still Life with Basket of Pears* (detail), 1925, églomisé, private coll.

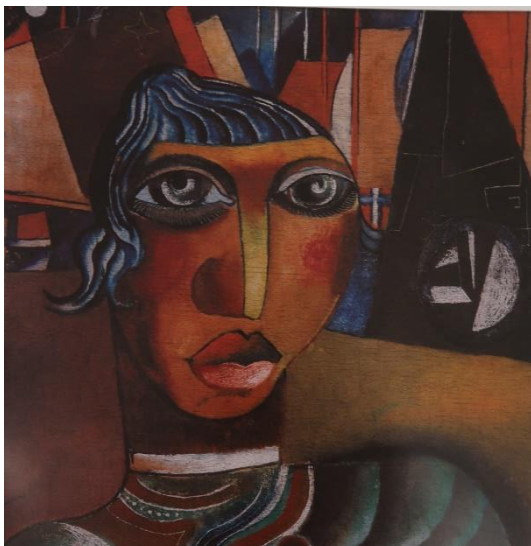


Fig.4 : Floris Jaspers, *Woman at the Port / The Fisherman's Wife*, 1925, private coll.



Fig.5 : Detail.



Fig.6 : Floris Jaspers, *Sailor with flower*, 1924, églomisé, private coll. / *Aquarium*, 1924, private coll.



Fig.7 : Floris Jaspers, *Study*, 1924, private coll.



Fig.8 : Catalog of the *Retrospectieve Floris Jaspers*, Ostend, PMMK, 2004.

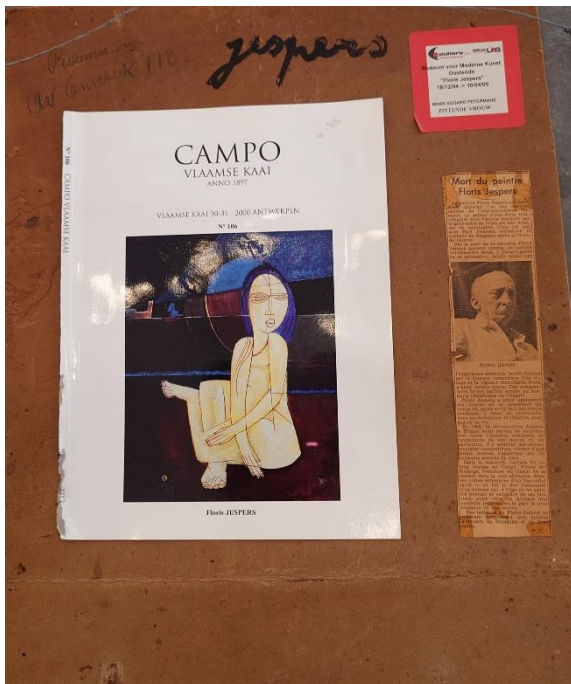


Fig.9 : Back of *Coquillage*.

Resources used

BUYCK (Jean), *Retrospectieve tentoonstelling Floris Jaspers*, Antwerp / Laren, KMSKA / Singer Museum, 1990.

BUYCK (Jean), *Oscar & Floris Jaspers de moderne jaren*, Antwerp / Ghent, Pandora / SDZ, 1996.

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FREDERICQ (Louise), *Floris Jaspers*, in : *Le Dictionnaire des peintres belges du XIV^e siècle à nos jours*, Brussels, La Renaissance du Livre, 1995.

LUST (Jacques), *Floris Jaspers*, in : *L'Art et la banque, une sélection de Rubens à Magritte*, Brussels, Fonds Mercator, 1997, pp.228-229.

Floris Jaspers, in : *Abstract Modernism* (abstractmodernisme.vlaamsekunstcollectie.be).
