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## Louis Anquetin

1861 Etrépigny - Paris 1932

### ***Autoportrait*** ***Self-portrait***

Brown ink on thin wove paper, ca. 1905

Signed lower right *Anquetin* and with the Anquetin studio sale's stamp on the back

Size 225 x 340 mm

Provenance The artist's studio sale (2008) ; Private collection, Paris

« (...) il ne me semble pas téméraire d'affirmer que, depuis Eugène Delacroix, personne dans la peinture n'a été aussi savant, aussi lyrique et aussi génial que Louis Anquetin. »<sup>1</sup>.

It's by those laudatory words that in 1934, two years after Louis Anquetin's death, the painter Emile Bernard concluded an article about his friend's career. The two artists had met in Fernand Cormon's studio, a place that Anquetin had started frequenting in 1882 with Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. From those years of formation to 1893, Louis Anquetin experimented many manners and technics, from realism to expressionism, before embracing his fascination for Flemish Masters. This artistic choice was met by an intense period of study of Rubens's manner, leading him to the redaction of a book on the subject in 1924. In parallel, Anquetin had also started to write a treaty defending his ideas on traditional painting. In the second half of his career, Anquetin aspired to the realization of monumental pieces. After World War I he composed two cartoons for a tapestry commemorating the soldiers, for the Manufacture de Beauvais.

Among these productions, Anquetin made many self-portraits both in drawings and in paintings, mostly in private collections, that can be linked to this intense period of artistic interrogations. In the case of the present composition, his face was rapidly traced with various intensity of the same brown ink. Composed with both lines and blurry shapes, Anquetin's figure seems like a direct apparition on the paper. The opposition between the outline of his left eye and the darkness shadowing the other part of his face gives a great power to his expression, particularly of his look. The dark shape seems to follow his profile, continuing until it becomes part of his curly beard. Anquetin is recognizable by his broken nose, that, as Emile Bernard noticed, made him look like Michelangelo. In his self-portraits, the artist seems to let play his imagination of the Old Masters, following the path of the artists he admired the most and aspiring to be considered as their artistic heir.

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<sup>1</sup> « I don't believe it's too foolhardy to say that, since Eugène Delacroix, no painter has been as erudite, as lyrical and as genial as Louis Anquetin. », Emile Bernard, "Louis Anquetin", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6e période, T. XI, 1934, p. 121.