

PAN

AMSTERDAM

DAATSELAAR THE COLLECTION



Two Girlfriends

oil on canvas | H 111x W 86 cm | signed with the artist's studio stamp 'Atelier Isaac Israels' (lower right)

Exhibited: -The Hague, Eva van Voorst van Beest Gallery, 'G.H. Breitner (1857-1923) Isaac Israels (1865-1934)', 21 September-16 November 2008, in exhibition brochure ill. p. 21, as: 'final painting'.

Provenance:-1934: Collection of the artist; The artist's studio sale, Frederik Muller, Amsterdam, 'Atelier Isaac Israels (Ilième partie)', 10-11 December 1935, lot 151, as: 'Twee vriendinnen'.
- Dutch private collection since at least the 1960s.

This large painting by Isaac Israëls, shows us two girlfriends, one positioned slightly behind the other. The woman in the foreground is depicted with bold, confident strokes wearing a brown and red jacket and a dark hat adorned with a red ribbon and flowers. Her expression is resolute and confident. She is more detailed than her girlfriend who is painted in softer, more subdued tones.

Israëls' characteristic loose brushwork and keen attention to light and shadow are evident in the painting "Two Girlfriends", bringing a vibrant immediacy to the scene. Isaac Israëls quickly painted a whitish background onto which he could capture these two ladies. He did this directly on the wet canvas, without first sketching the outline with pencil.

"Two Girlfriends" by Isaac Israëls is a poignant and evocative work that holds special significance as it is believed to be his last painting, left on his easel at the time of his death.

In 1934 Isaac Israëls was hit by a car while he was walking in The Hague. A few days later on October 7 he died in his house on Koninginnegracht. There were still many canvases in his studio, many pastels and watercolors in large folders, sketchbooks in drawers as well as "Two Girlfriends" standing on his easel.

He only signed his work when a canvas went to an art dealer for sale, so the question arose: what to do with all these unsigned works? His sister, Mathilde Cohen Tervaert-Israels, was his sole heir. Together with the director of the Gemeentemuseum, H.E. van Gelder, and a notary, an atelier stamp was designed, an oval model with the text 'Atelier Isaac Israels'. The stamp was used with red ink on the many paintings, watercolours, and pastels to authenticate all of this.

Isaac Israëls, together with George Hendrik Breitner, was the leading representative of the group of Amsterdam Impressionists. He painted fragments of life he chanced across in the capital's shopping streets, coffee houses and café-chantants, where busy urban living was played out. In a few apt charcoal lines or quick, spontaneous brushstrokes, with subtle color accents, he captured everything he saw.

'Two girlfriends' provides a beautiful snapshot and, given the knowledge that this painting was most likely his last painting, makes it a key piece in the oeuvre of Isaac Israëls.