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Hermenegildo Anglada-Camarasa
(Barcelona 1871 - 1959 Pollença)

Nocturne

Paris, c. 1900

oil on panel

44.5 x 55 cm.;

17 1/2 x 21 5/8 in.

signed lower right: *Hermen. Anglada*

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Hermen Anglada-Camarasa is regarded as one of the most ground-breaking and modern Spanish painters of the early 20th century, as well as one of those who attained the greatest international recognition of their time. After an initial period of traditional training based on realism, Anglada settled in Paris at the end of 1894 and it was there that he succeeded in turning his painting around. The *Ville Lumière* was for him a discovery and a challenge in the evolution of his work. It was also crucial in his embracing modernity and creating new avenues of expression. Influenced by post-impressionist trends and Nabi painting in the French capital, Anglada defined a personal style that was reinforced by the contacts he made first at the Académie Julian and later at the Académie Colarossi in Montparnasse.

The present work is one of a series of nocturnes that Hermen Anglada-Camarasa painted in Parisian gardens around 1900. It is a panel, probably painted directly on the Champs Élysées, in which the contrasts of light are the protagonists and define the grounds and depth of the composition. The mystery of the night scene, with its faint light, is emphasised by the presence of figures who, like phosphorescent phantasmagoria, seem to levitate through space and become the central theme of the work.

Anglada divides the panel into two grounds. In the foreground, a solitary figure emerges from the left. The figure, with her pale, almost sickly skin, is merely a succession of evanescent yellow spots with greenish phosphorescence which, thanks to the simulated effect of radiating her own light, captures the viewer's gaze. The woman advances elegantly, wearing a large hat and well-dressed, like a 'nocturnal butterfly', as defined by the painter in other compositions on the same subject, like the one in the Museu Cau Ferrat in Sitges (Barcelona). To emphasise the contrast, in the background the darkness of the garden area is interrupted and punctuated by the electric lights that illuminate the avenue, where more figures can be glimpsed, only sketched out in smudged patches.

It was nocturnes like this that allowed Anglada-Camarasa to achieve a personal style that was fully in keeping with pictorial modernity and drew on the Post-Impressionist trends in vogue in fin-de-siècle Paris. His Parisian nocturnes of 1899 and 1902 are the most highly valued works of his entire career. The great acceptance of this personal typology codified by

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Anglada-Camarasa among the clientele of the French capital at the beginning of the 20th century turned his career around so that he was able to exhibit his work in major European cities to great public acclaim, including Berlin, Munich, Vienna, London, Ghent and Venice, where he took part in the 1905 Biennale. The Biennale marked his definitive international consecration, but mention must also be made of the exhibition of Anglada-Camarasa's work at the Sala Parés in Barcelona between April and May 1900, which signalled the birth of modern painting in Catalonia. In fact, all critics and art historians agree that this exhibition had a huge impact on the young Pablo Picasso and spurred him to move to Paris a few months later.

Sergio Fuentes Milà