PAN
AMSTERDAM

KUNSTHANDEL BOB SCHOLTE FINE ART

Self-Portrait with Apple

46 x 36 cm
Chalk, gouache and ink on paper
Signed centre left "BOB, A'dam" and dated "'29"
1929

Provenance:
Levit Collection, Haarlem.

Exhibited:
Vermoorde kunst. Werk van vermoorde joodse kunstenaars, Noord-Veluws Museum, 24 March – 20 November 2020.
Vrouwenpalet. Haar kunst haar verhaal, Museum de Wieger, Museum Dr8888 and Kunsthal Rotterdam, 9 July – 20 November 2022.
Vrouwenpalet 1900–1950, Kunsthal Rotterdam, 24 December 2022 – 9 April 2023.

Rebecca van Gelder (1891–1945), who also worked under the names Bob Stratthon van Gelder and Bobette Stratthon-van Gelder, was an Amsterdam-based painter, draughtswoman and illustrator. After a brief period at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, she continued her training in Berlin, London and Paris. This international outlook is reflected in her fluent, modern visual language and her keen interest in urban life, fashion and the human figure.

Van Gelder painted portraits, figure studies and landscapes, but became best known as an illustrator, fashion artist and perceptive observer of modern life. Her satirical depictions of high society appeared in Dutch and international magazines and were particularly well received in England and France. To avoid being judged primarily as a female artist, she frequently signed her work Bob Stratthon van Gelder, the name under which she also exhibited. Reviewing her work in 1941, a critic for the Algemeen Handelsblad praised her "free and effortless" compositions, noting the "strange charm" and subtle, biting wit that distinguished her paintings.

A member of the artists' association De Onafhankelijken, Van Gelder exhibited alongside artists such as Chris Beekman, Dirk Filarski and Fré Cohen. Her promising career was cut short by the Second World War. After a period in hiding, she was deported via Westerbork to Bergen-Belsen, where she died in January 1945. Long overlooked, her work has received renewed attention in recent years through exhibitions such as Vermoorde Kunst (Murdered Art) and Vrouwenpalet 1900–1950 (Women's Palette 1900–1950).

In this self-portrait of 1929, Van Gelder signs her work with the pseudonym 'Bob', the name under which she presented an important part of her oeuvre. Holding an apple, she evokes the biblical figure of Eve, reimagined as a modern woman of the interwar period: self-assured, elegant and meeting the viewer's gaze directly. Van Gelder left behind only a small body of work, of which just two self-portraits are known, making this a particularly rare and personal work.