

**LOUISE HENDERSON**

1902 - 1994

*Les Deux Amies (The Two Friends)*, 1953

Oil on canvas 74 x 56

Signed

75,000 - 100,000

Provenance:

Private Collection, Auckland

Illustrated:

*Louise Henderson: The Cubist Years 1946 - 1958*

Auckland City Art Gallery, 29 August - 13 October, 1991

Loan collection, New Gallery, Auckland 1995 - 1998

Illustrated:

p. 11, cat. no. 15,

*Louise Henderson: The Cubist Years 1946 - 1958*Published on the occasion of the above exhibition  
Auckland City Art Gallery, 1991

Reference:

p. 2, 11 &amp; 37

*Louise Henderson: The Cubist Years 1946 - 1958*Louise Henderson with *Les Deux Amies*, November 1953

In February 1954, Colin McCahon wrote of this work: 'the two women become real to us through the building up of apparently unrelated planes to become the very being of the two friends, quite real people with real personality; that is, if we look at this picture not filled with our own ideas of what such people should look like, but as the scientist looks at the minute world in a drop of water, prepared to accept new aspects of reality, rather than turn away from discovery fearful that past theories may now be invalid'.

Louise Henderson by Dr Angela Mackie:

We were indeed fortunate that the larger-than-life Louise Etienne Sidonie Sauze married New Zealander Hubert Henderson and hence brought her artistic skills, as well as her European personality, to the largely anglo-saxon based antipodean community in New Zealand.

She came here with aristocratic artistic credentials being the daughter of the secretary to Rodin. Her childhood memories included playing with small pieces of marble while her father and Rodin talked art!

Louise's inclination towards cubism, gleaned from her interest in Cézanne, Picasso and Braque, took another step forward following her close association with John Weeks and led to 12 months study in 1952 of figurative cubism in Paris with the cubist Jean Metzinger.

*Les Deux Amies* (The Two Friends) was produced a year later in 1953. The two friends are not merely joining hands; angular forms are repeated and interlock. The lower halves of each body are intertwined in geometric shapes which so intersect and overlap that the two appear inextricably one and share a common "apron" of white/blue splintered form, as does their dark hair.

Parallel lines formed by three upper arms hold them together while the right arm of the left figure provides an angular circle which is repeated by her left arm round the head and shoulders of her friend.

The two share tonal variations on the primary colours of blue and red while the differing colours of the two faces, one blue and the other a warm soft red/tan, serve to reveal the character of each sitter.

The negative space of the "background" is not divided in a cubist manner but is given a Degas-like geometric form on the upper right hand side with the middle and left hand plane divided into two blocks of colour reflecting the traditional Caravaggioesque division of background into light and shade.

*Les Deux Amies* (The Two Friends) is one of Louise Henderson's finest examples of figurative cubism.

Angela Mackie

  
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