**Michel (Moïse) Gherchenzone, 1907– after 1976 [DRAFT]**

This painter was apparently born as Moïse Gherchenzone on 31 August 1907 in Kishinev, Russian Bessarabia, which became Chișinău, in the Kingdom of Romania from 1918 and is now capital of the Republic of Moldova. He studied there at its Ecole des Beaux Arts and being of Jewish family perhaps first adopted the name Mikhail for early reasons of camouflage against anti-semitism. Its later change to Michel may have been a consequence of his move to Paris in 1927 and /or to distinguish himself from the older Russian writer Mikhail Gershenzon (1869–1925), the spelling of whose name also varies.

He seems thereafter to have remained in France. Heritage Doncaster has a beach view at Cannes signed ‘M. Guerchenzon’ and dated 1936, which is the only oil work by him listed on Art UK. In 1940 (as Moïse Gherchenzone) he was a German prisoner in Stalag VIIA, having been captured in the French 22nd Foreign Volunteer Regiment (RMVE). He survived the war and in the third quarter of 1949 married an English woman, Edith Mary Hitchen, at a registry office wedding in Surrey. They subsequently lived in France. In 1974 a notice in a Florida newspaper (the *Port Charlotte Daily Herald*, 30 August) mentions a cousin there making a visit to Nice for the 25th wedding anniversary of ‘Mary and Michel Gherchenzone’, giving their marriage date as 7 September. They by then probably already lived in Vence, in the Alpes Maritimes west of Nice, since when Edith Mary died on 30 September 1988 her address was given as 194 Chemin du Siege in that town. She appears to have been a woman of some property in England as her will was proved in London with estate not exceeding £115,000.

When and where her husband died is not clear. He had certainly continued to paint, exhibiting at the Salon des Indépendants, and had a solo exhibition at the Free French Club, Paris, in 1966. He was still listed in the *International Who's Who in Art and Antiques* in 1976 but the matter is confused by the existence of another Michel Gherchenzone, born in 1938, who might have been son of an earlier marriage. A ‘Moïse Ghersenzon’ also born in Romania, died at Bordeaux on 26 March 2001, aged 91: his birth date of 8 May 1909 suggests this is name coincidence but the uncertainties remain to be resolved.

*Summarised from the Art UK discussion on the Cannes beach scene at Doncaster, May 2021.*

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