

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Henri Royer (Nancy 1869 - Neuilly-sur-Seine 1938)

A Sheet of Studies of Women

Black and red chalk, with touches of white heightening, on paper laid down on a thin board.
Signed Henri Royer. at the lower right centre.
476 x 629 mm. (18 3/4 x 24 3/4 in.)

At the time of an exhibition of Henri Royer's work at the Galerie Jean Charpentier in Paris in 1928, the critic Roger Dardenne noted that, 'It is perhaps with the female portrait, however, that M. Henri Royer shows the fullest measure of his mastery. The delicacy of temperament, a natural elegance, combined with a great confidence in his profession, allow him to render, with a truth full of charm, the faces of women and young girls.'

This sheet of studies, drawn in red and black chalk, may be regarded as preparatory for the sort of finished portrait drawing in coloured chalks exemplified by the pastel portrait of a woman reproduced as a full-page illustration in colour in the Christmas 1923 issue of the magazine L'Illustration. In comments which may equally be said to be relevant to the present sheet, the text accompanying the portrait drawing in L'Illustration noted that 'This is one of the pastels in which Henri Royer excels, to whom we owe, in addition to his fine work as a painter, some admirable drawings in coloured chalks. A portrait of a young woman, treated with astonishing descriptive confidence, light fabrics, intangible, veiling and revealing the body, the face lit by a smile...A work of expressive grace and luminous harmony.'

Exhibitions

Mulhouse, Exposition de Mulhouse, 1914, according to a label on the old backing board.

Artist description:

Henri Paul Royer was active as a portraitist and genre painter, as well as a draughtsman and illustrator. After a period of study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, he completed his training at the Académie Julian, where he studied with Jules Lefebvre, François Flemeng and Louis Devilly. He exhibited frequently at the Salon des Artistes Français from 1890 onwards, and in 1896 made his first visit to Brittany, where he returned for several years, producing genre paintings of the life and customs of the people of Cap-Sizun, south of Finistère. Indeed, he became particularly known for his views of Brittany and scenes of Breton life, which he showed at the Salons. Royer bought a house in the Breton town of

Audierne, and made several paintings and drawings of the costumes of the local inhabitants of the Ile de Sein, a small island off the western tip of Brittany. He won a gold medal at the Exposition Universelle in 1900, the same year in which he was admitted into the Légion d'Honneur. He also worked as an illustrator, providing images for the novels of Guy de Maupassant, and travelled extensively throughout Europe, as well as in North and South America. Paintings by Royer are today in the museums of Angers, Quimper, Brest, Nancy and elsewhere.