

**Eugène DEVÉRIA (Paris 1805 - Pau 1865)**

**A Mother and Child**

Pencil. A made up area at the bottom of the sheet.
574 x 471 mm. (22 5/8 x 18 1/2 in.) [oval]

The attribution of this drawing to Eugène Deveria is suggested by a comparison with a related drawing by the artist containing a pair of oval sketches - one depicting quite possibly the same mother and child and the other of the child alone, seated in a pose akin to that in the present sheet – in the collection of the Kunsthalle in Bremen. Also in Bremen is a related pencil study depicting the same sitters within an inscribed oval, with the young girl standing and holding a book. A third oval drawing of the same mother and child is in the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. All three drawings are believed to depict the artist's wife Caroline and their daughter Marie, born in 1831, and may represent compositional studies for a planned oval portrait of mother and daughter. To judge from the apparent age of the young girl in these drawings, they may be dated to around 1835-1836, when Marie was four or five years old.

Deveria met Caroline-Marie-Aglae Seconde Fraternelle, called Lavie-Duransel (1793-1863), when he was seventeen and she was twenty-nine. Although the relationship did not meet with the approval of Deveria's parents or his brother Achille, Eugène refused to end the affair. Nevertheless, despite the birth of their only child Marie in 1831, the couple were not married until ten years later, in 1841. Marie died in 1856, at the age of twenty-six, while Caroline died in 1863, two years before the artist.

**Provenance:**

Jane Roberts, London, in 1989.

**Artist description:**

A student of Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson and Guillaume Lethière, Eugène Devéria was, from early in his career, regarded as one of the leading Romantic painters in France. He achieved public success at the age of twenty-two, when his painting of The Birth of Henri IV was exhibited to considerable acclaim at his Salon debut in 1827. Richly coloured and ambitious in scale, and indebted to the example of Rubens and Veronese, the painting served to establish Devéria's reputation. Its success led the following year to a commission to paint the ceiling of one of the rooms in the Louvre; by far the youngest of the five artists chosen for the task, the others being Martin Drolling, Jean Alaux, Victor Schnetz and François-Joseph Heim. Devéria's mural was completed in 1833 and exhibited at the Salon the following year.

By this time he was enjoying an official career and had received numerous public commissions, unlike his older brother and fellow-painter Achille, whose influence on him was considerable. In 1836 he painted a scene of The Oath of Louis-Philippe for the Musée de l'Histoire de France at Versailles. Between 1838 and 1840 he decorated the walls and vault of a chapel in the cathedral of Notre-Dame-des-Doms in Avignon; his most significant work as a religious painter. This was to be his last significant public commission, since not long afterwards he retired to Pau, in the Pyrenees, where he lived in seclusion until the end of his life. (He also converted to Calvinism in 1843, causing a split with Achille.) The 1840's and 1850's found Devéria painting scenes from medieval English history, Shakespeare's plays and Romantic novels; works far removed from contemporary developments in the art world of Paris. His last years were spent in relative obscurity, and he worked mainly as a portrait, genre and landscape painter.