

Charles CHAPLIN (Les Andelys 1825 - Paris 1891)

A Young Girl: Study for L'Amour vaincu

Black and white chalk, with stumping, and pastel.
Signed Ch Chaplin at the lower centre.
191 x 147 mm. (7 1/2 x 5 3/4 in.)

The present sheet is related, in reverse, to a small allegorical painting by Chaplin entitled L'Amour vaincu, which depicts a young woman gazing down at three winged putti who stand or kneel before her in penitence, after spilling a basket of flowers. The composition which was reproduced as a small print by Boussod Valadon & Cie. A pendant composition, entitled L'Amour vainqueur, was also reproduced as a print. A pair of paintings of both compositions were sold at auction in New York in 1981.

Provenance:

Private collection, France.

Artist description:

Born to a French mother and an English father, Charles Chaplin worked in France for his entire career and, though he continued to retain his English citizenship until 1886, considered himself French and actually spoke very little English. Chaplin took private lessons in the studio of the painter Michel-Martin Drolling before entering the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1843. He first exhibited at the Salon in 1845, showing a portrait of his mother, and continued to do so regularly, showing portraits, landscapes, genre subjects and floral still lifes. While his early work was in a more Realist vein, by the late 1850s he began to work in an elegant and graceful neo-Rococo manner reminiscent of the work of such artists as

François Boucher, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Jean-Baptiste Chardin and Thomas Gainsborough. (As he once wrote to a friend, 'If I would, I would lose myself in the Past. I have a particular love for the charming French school of the last century.') Best known for elegant portraits of young women and children, as well as allegorical or mythological genre paintings, all painted with a lightness and delicacy of touch, Chaplin delighted in depicting woman and young girls in carefree moments.

The paintings of this 'Peintre des Grâces', praised by such writers as Charles Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier and artists like Edouard Manet, were very popular throughout the Second Empire, and were sought after by collectors. Among his fervent admirers were Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie, for whom he worked extensively. As has been noted by one recent scholar, 'Chaplin could portray all the charms of feminine beauty to their greatest advantage, achieving a sort of innocent sensuality that, at its best, fell short of being over-sentimental, and was never vulgar.' In 1861 Chaplin contributed paintings to the decoration of the Salon des Fleurs in the Palais des Tuileries, destroyed by fire a decade later, and also worked in the Elysée palace in 1861. He was also a fine draughtsman, watercolourist and engraver.

Apart from the annual Salons in Paris, Chaplin regularly sent paintings to the Royal Academy in London. His reputation also spread to America, as can be seen in an American art journal of 1879: '"The De Musset of painting – the painter par excellence of youth." are terms which have been applied to Charles Chaplin, a popular French artist, who has long been before the public, and whose works are always welcome on both sides of the Atlantic...At the Chicago Exhibition, held during the summer of 1878, a fine work by Chaplin, belonging to the White estate, was to be seen in the art gallery, much commended for its extreme delicacy in conception, refinement in color and grace in treatment.'

Chaplin's success as a painter made him wealthy and earned him several awards and honours, including membership in the Legion d'Honneur. Chaplin's studio was one of the few in Paris that welcomed women as students, and among his pupils were Louise Abbéma, Madeleine Lemaire, Eva Gonzalès and Mary Cassatt.