

Henry SOMM (Rouen 1844 - Paris 1907)

Wildflowers at the Base of a Tree
Watercolour.

Signed with the artist's initials H. S at the lower right.

198 x 139 mm. (7 7/8 x 5 1/2 in.)

Artist description:

After studying at the École Municipale de Dessin in Rouen, François Clément Sommier, known professionally as Henry Somm, settled in Paris in the late 1860s, where he trained briefly with Isidore Pils. He enjoyed a successful career as an illustrator and draughtsman, contributing regularly to such popular journals as Le Monde parisien, Tout-Paris and Alfred Cadart's bi-monthly L'Illustration Nouvelle, as well as providing illustrations for satirical books like Jacques Olivier's Alphabet de l'imperfection et malice de femmes, published in 1876. Somm was also active as a graphic designer, providing menus, theatre programs, invitations and announcements for the many fashionable events of Belle Epoque Paris. He also produced visiting cards and bookplates, as well as designs for plates for the Haviland porcelain factory, commissioned by the firm's artistic director, Félix Bracquemond. At the invitation of Edgar Degas, Somm took part in the fourth Impressionist exhibition of 1879, showing his prints alongside those of Braquemond and works by Degas, Mary Cassatt and Camille Pissarro. The 1880s found Somm among a group of artists associated with the cabaret Le Chat Noir in Paris, for whose eponymous journal he published reviews and articles. Somm's finished drawings are often related to his more commercial work as an illustrator for magazines or such books as Georges Montorgeuil's La Parisienne peint par elle-même, published in 1897. In the latter part of his career, he was chiefly employed by the periodical Le Rire. Required to provide several drawings for each issue, his

draughtsmanship became both more economical in line and more self-assured. Somm died in 1907 in relative obscurity.