

Raphaël KIRCHNER (Vienna 1875 - New York 1917)

An Elegant Woman with a Fur Muff

Gouache over an underdrawing in black chalk and touches of white chalk, on brown paper.

Signed, indistinctly dedicated and dated *RAPHAËL* / *KIRCHNER* / *à mon* [?] / [?] *sympathetique* / *Oct.*(?) *1914* in white chalk at the lower left.

Further inscribed *fourrure par le client* and [?] *No.3* on the verso.

424 x 161 mm. (16 5/8 x 6 3/8 in.)

The present sheet is dated 1914, the same year that Raphaël Kirchner left Paris for New York. The dress depicted in this gouache drawing may have been inspired by the work of the couturier Paul Poiret (1879-1944), a dominant figure in the world of fashion design in France in the 1910s.

This drawing belonged to the German publisher Gustav Heinrich Lübbe (1918-1995).

Artist description:

Coming of age at the height of the Art Nouveau period, Raphaël Kirchner began his career in his native Vienna, where he studied at the Akademie der bildenden Künste and became one of the most renowned illustrators associated with the Secessionist movement. He was known in particular for the risqué 'Kirchner Girl'; a highly eroticised and exotic woman, embracing her freedom and sexuality, who appeared in hundreds of picture postcards. After his move to Paris in 1900, Kirchner continued to depict these seductive women, though the influence of Parisian fashion led his muses to be transformed from languid and sensuous to more elegant and sophisticated. In Paris Kirchner developed a reputation as a portraitist and illustrator, working in particular for the weekly magazine La vie parisienne. His alluring depictions of the nightlife of Paris, and in particular the exotic women of the bars and cabarets of Montmartre, led to considerable success.

Not long after the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Kirchner left Europe and settled in New York. There he met a fellow Viennese artist and architect, Josef Urban. It was through Urban that Kirchner was hired to design marketing and paint decorative panels for the Century Theatre in New York. His panels of The Seven Deadly Sins, later produced as a popular postcard set, hung in the lobby of the theatre, and brought the 'Kirchner Girls' to popularity in America. This renewed success allowed Kirchner to remain active as a portraitist and illustrator until his early death in 1917, at the age of forty-one.