

LE CLAIRE

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KUNST



FRANÇOIS-LOUIS-JOSEPH WATTEAU, CALLED WATTEAU DE LILLE
1758 Valenciennes - Lille 1823

Jeune femme assise, la main gauche abritant son front [A Seated Woman shading her Eyes from the Light]

Black and white chalks on bluish paper with watermark *D & C* [BLAUW] and grapes; executed between 1785-90.

557 x 393 mm

PROVENANCE: Charles Lengart, Lille – Félix Dehau, Lille – His sale: Drouot, Paris, 23-24 April 1909, lot 161 – Sale: Drouot, Paris 22-23 February 1929, lot 114. – Matthiesen Gallery, London – Private collection, Germany

LITERATURE: Gaëtane Maës, *Les Watteau de Lille, Louis Watteau (1731-1798), François Watteau (1758-1823)*, Paris, 1998, p. 444, no. FD 147, repr.

EXHIBITION: Matthiesen Gallery, *Exhibition of French Master Drawings of the 18th Century*, London, no. 111.

François Watteau was first his father's pupil at the Lille school of drawing. Between 1775 and 1885 he studied at the Académie Royale in Paris. On his return to Lille he became his father's assistant in 1786, succeeding him in 1798 as principal teacher and director of the school of drawing.

The present drawing belongs to a group of studies of women, all executed in the same medium and with similar dimensions.¹ The outlines of the figure are quickly pointed out with black chalk. The shadows are indicated by large layers of hatchings that remind drawings by Trinquesse, and the lights on the face and costume are dramatically accentuated by white heightenings. Most comparable is a drawing preserved in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lille.² (Fig. 1)

Studies after the male nude belonged to the final stage of instruction at the École du dessin in the 18th century, but female models were not allowed within the academies. For studies after the female corps the artists had to copy sculptures and engravings, or they could use dressed models. It seems that François Watteau used women from his family circle as his models, amongst them probably his wife and some of his six sisters. Generally, these large format portraits are distinguished by the realistic appearance of the models and their attractive and sometimes unusual presentation.

¹ Gaëtane Maës, op. cit., p. 442-8, no. FD 144-FD 155.

² Gaëtane Maës, op. cit., p. 445, no. FD 150.



Fig. 1: *Femme assise vue de trois quarts face*; 1785-95.
Black and white chalks on grey-brown paper;
555 x 423 mm.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille [inv. no. 1711].