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Pauline Auzou (1775-1835), Portrait Of A Young Woman With Braids, Circa 1800



5 500 EUR

Signature : Pauline Auzou (Paris, 1775 - 1835)

Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Paper

Width : 31

Height : 43

Description

Pauline Auzou  
(Paris 1775-1835)

Portrait of a Young Woman with Braids

With later inscription, lower right: "Gerard"

Black chalk and white heightening on laid paper  
43 x 31 cm (17 x 12¼ in.)

Provenance: Private collection, France.

This refined and sensitive drawing, executed in black chalk with touches of white heightening, depicts a young woman shown half-length, turning gracefully toward the viewer with a quiet air of assurance. Her direct gaze, elongated lashes and faintly smiling lips lend the sheet an immediacy and charm that are entirely characteristic of portrait studies produced in France around 1800. Particularly striking is the treatment of the sitter's hair, arranged in braided

Dealer

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bands at the back while soft curls fall freely around the face, a coiffure closely associated with the early Napoleonic period. By contrast, the artist has rendered the blouse with notable economy, leaving the costume lightly indicated and thereby giving the composition an appealing freshness and studied informality.

Bust-length head studies occupy an important place within Pauline Auzou's drawn oeuvre, which is hardly surprising for an artist working in France at the turn of the nineteenth century. Their significance is underscored by the publication in 1800, by the Didot press, of an album of her studies after heads, titled *Têtes d'études*. Auzou was celebrated in her own lifetime as a gifted and deeply committed draughtswoman; one contemporary recalled that "nothing could distract her from her studies." Although she did not sign her drawings, the attribution of the present sheet is supported by comparison with a group of head studies from the artist's descendants, sold at Christie's, London, in 2000. As in those works, one finds here the same meticulous handling of hair, animated by delicate highlights, the same subtle modulation of black chalk in the flesh passages, and the same intentionally summary notation of costume.

Born in Paris, Auzou trained in the studio of Jean-Baptiste Regnault and first exhibited at the Salon in 1793, at the remarkable age of eighteen. She went on to enjoy a successful career, exhibiting portraits, genre subjects and mythological compositions, and won a first-class medal at the Salon of 1808. In 1810 she received a commission to paint Napoleon and Marie-Louise, a telling sign of the esteem in which she was held. Later in life, she also founded and ran a school for the training of young women artists. The present drawing is a fine example of her accomplished draughtsmanship: at once intimate, elegant and highly characteristic of the refined portrait sensibility of the period.