

# COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Camille Métra  
(Paris 1864 – 1936)

*A woman pleating her hair, possibly La Cigale*

Signed (lower right): CAMILLE METRA

Pastel

65 x 54 cm. (25 ½ x 21 ¼ in.)

Provenance:

Aschan Galerie, Ville d'Avray.

Exhibited:

Possibly the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1895, no. 1528.



Camille Métra exhibited regularly at the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts from 1891 to 1903, using her maiden name before 1895 and exhibiting as Hubbard-Métra after her second marriage. Métra was also a member of the Union of Women Painters and exhibited frequently at their annual exhibition between 1891 and 1911.

Although we know little of her biography, Métra's extant work reveals a talented artist, working in a late Academic and Art Nouveau style. Active primarily as a pastellist, though also confident with oil painting, Métra seems to have focussed on arcadian subjects, often derived from literary and mythological sources. She was also active as a portraitist, particularly of children. After the death of her first husband in 1892, Métra married the French politician Gustave-Adolphe Hubbard, with the couple divorcing in 1904.



Fig. 1, Camille Métra, *The cup of the king of Thulé*, 1896, oil on canvas, 114 x 146 cm., Galerie Lardemelle

Signed with her maiden name, the present work likely predates Métra's marriage in 1895. The pastel may be *La Cigale*, exhibited at the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1894. Drawn from La Fontaine's fable *The Grasshopper and the Ant*, the title alludes to the fate of one who (like a grasshopper) 'sings all summer' instead of preparing (like an ant) for the hardships of winter. By Métra's time, *La Cigale* had become a metaphor for the beautiful *bohème* who lives with no thought for the future. A popular artistic subject in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, *La Cigale* was typically depicted as a young brunette set against a verdant backdrop of foliage, usually with a musical instrument, though not always so. Whatever the case, with her flowing tresses and emerging from a dense forest of vegetation, Métra's young woman is an archetypal Art Nouveau subject.