

# ELLIOTT FINE ART

*Nineteenth Century to Early Modern*

French School, c. 1880

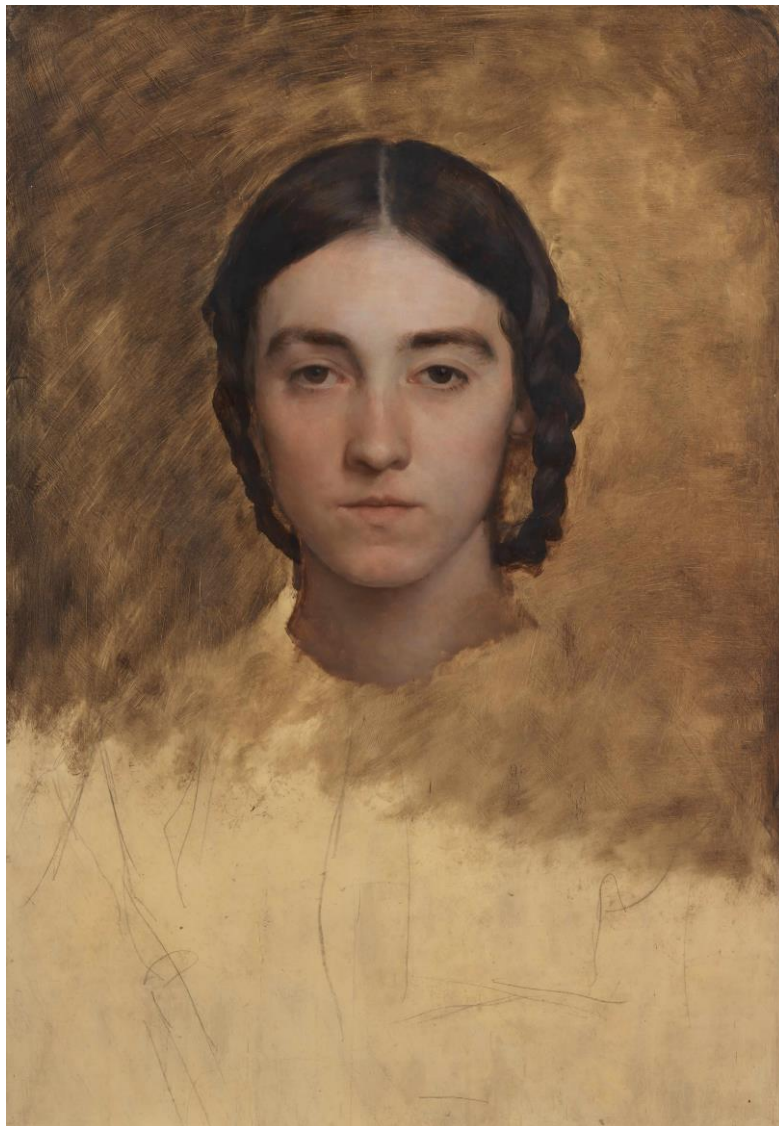
*Portrait of a woman with braids*

Oil on panel

55.6 x 38 cm. (22 x 15 in.)

Provenance:

Bonhams, London, 6 July 2022, lot 111.



Despite its exceptional quality, this painting has so far resisted an attribution, though it is undoubtedly by a leading French artist of the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also remains unclear whether the picture is a study for a larger composition or an unfinished portrait in its own right. Whatever the case, the intense focus on the sitter's face, set against the softly blurred background, heightens the emotional impact of the painting and creates an arresting visual effect.

The artist may well belong to the Naturalist movement, whose artists explored the French countryside and portrayed its inhabitants with sincerity and realism. Both the refined technique and the direct, almost confrontational gaze of the sitter – accentuated by her simple, rustic braids – are strongly reminiscent of Jules Bastien-Lepage (fig. 1).

His portraits (fig. 2), combining meticulous detail with either more impressionistic or neutral backgrounds, often convey the same frontality, directness and intensity that characterise this work.



Fig. 1, Jules Bastien-Lepage, *October*, 1878, oil on canvas, 181 x 196 cm, National Gallery of Victoria



Fig. 1, Jules Bastien-Lepage, *La Communiant*, 1875, oil on canvas, 53 x 38 cm, Musée de Beaux-Arts de Tournai