

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Jean-Baptiste Isabey
(Nancy 1767 – 1855 Paris)

Portrait of a woman from Arles

Monogrammed, located and dated lower right: *Jl. / arles / 26 aout 1837.*

Pencil on paper

15.5 x 12.2 cm. (6 x 4 ¾ in.)

Provenance:

Private Collection, Never, France, until 2024.



This beautiful pencil portrait of an Arlésienne was drawn by Jean-Baptiste Isabey in 1836. Despite the celebrated artist having just entered his eighth decade, Isabey has lost neither the skill nor the precision that made his name over half a century earlier. The portrait, like his best work, is characterised by its detail and elegance, capturing the subject's grace and personality.

The sitter is from Arles, as denoted by the inscription but also evident from her distinctive costume. Arlésiennes were famous for their unique dress, as well as their beauty, and inspired many artists, composers and writers over the course of the 19th century.

Though best known as a miniaturist, Isabey's graphic work was also highly thought of. Though capable of highly worked up sheets in multi-media (fig. 1), the present work, with its refined use of pencil, responds to Ingres (fig. 2) and thereby demonstrates Isabey's desire to compete with his famous peer in this medium.

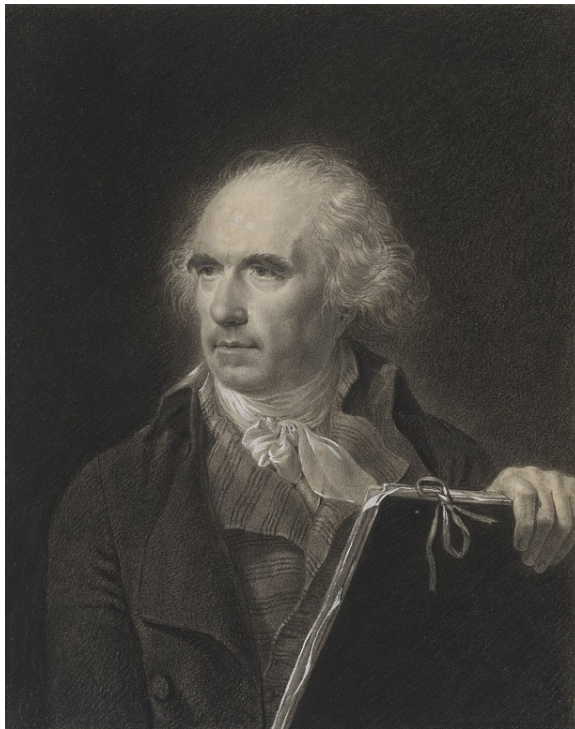


Fig. 1, Jean-Baptiste Isabey, *Portrait of Hubert Robert*, 1787, black chalk with stumping, heightened with white gouache on paper, 26.5 x 20.7 cm., National Gallery of Art, Washington



Fig. 2, Jean-Dominique Ingres, *Madame Baltard with her daughter Paule*, 1836, pencil on paper, 30.6 x 22.8 cm., Private Collection

Born in Nancy, France, Isabey demonstrated early artistic talent, leading him to Paris where he became a pupil of Jacques-Louis David in 1788. Isabey quickly gained recognition for his miniature portraits, which were highly sought after by the French aristocracy. His career flourished during the Napoleonic era, with Isabey becoming a favoured artist at the Imperial court. He painted numerous portraits of Napoleon and his family and was drawing master to Empress Joséphine.

After the fall of Napoleon, Isabey adapted to the changing political climate, maintaining his status as a court painter under the Bourbon Restoration and later, the July Monarchy. He

received several prestigious honours, including being made a member of the Legion of Honour.