

# COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Leonor Fini  
(Buenos Aires 1907 – 1996 Paris)

*Female face, from the Book of Monelle*

Signed right: *Leonor Fini*  
Ink on paper  
19 cm x 18 cm. (7 ½ in x 7 in.)

Provenance:  
Private Collection, France, until 2024.

Exhibited:  
Château de Vascoeuil, Normandy, *Leonor Fini*, 1977.



Leonor Fini's pen study of a fantastical female face relates to her series of etchings done in 1976 to illustrate *The Book of Monelle*, written by Marcelle Schwob nearly a century earlier. Fini created illustrations and etchings for several literary works, particularly those with Symbolist, Surrealist and decadent themes, subjects which suited her sensual, mysterious and dreamlike imagination. Other series included Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus* and *Juliette* by the Marquis du Sade.

When Schwob released *The Book of Monelle* in 1894, it quickly became a cornerstone of the French Symbolist movement, earning admiration from figures like Stéphane Mallarmé, Alfred Jarry, and André Gide. The work is a unique blend of allegory, aphorism, fairy tale, and existential musings, retaining its mysterious and unsettling power over a century later. Written in a style reminiscent of both the Brothers Grimm and Nietzsche, it is a fragmented exploration of grief and decay.

Schwob was deeply affected by the death of Louise, a young woman he loved who died of tuberculosis in 1893, and he immortalized her as Monelle, a prophetic figure of innocence and destruction. Through Monelle's voice, Schwob recounts the tales of her symbolic sisters—girls grappling with the tension between idealized childhood fantasies and the harsh truths of adulthood.

A fantastically talented draughtswoman, Fini was able to bring her creations alive through her expressive yet meticulous technique. Fluid and dynamic, Fini gives her drawings a sense of organic life. Here, Monelle, or one of her sisters, looks determinedly out at the viewer, her face enclosed by fantastical and biological forms.

We are grateful to Cedric Lefebvre, co-author of the forthcoming catalogue raisonné, for having confirmed the attribution.