

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Marie Braquemond
(Landunvex 1840 – 1916 Sèvres)

Two studies of a young woman with a mask and study of a hand holding a fan

Pencil on paper
35 x 30 cm. (13 ¾ x 11 ¾ in.)

Provenance:
Estate of the artist;
By descent in the artist's family, until;
Artcurial, Paris, 9 October 2024, lot 207.



This captivating study by Impressionist artist Marie Bracquemond appears to have been created as an independent drawing rather than a preparatory sketch for a finished painting. While not a self-portrait, the facial features of the young woman closely resemble Marie (fig. 1), suggesting an autobiographical element. It seems the artist may have been exploring different personas, using her art to conceal or reveal aspects of her identity.



Fig. 1, Marie Bracquemond, *Self-portrait in a Spanish Costume*, 1880, etching, 25 x 30.5 cm



Fig. 2, Marie Bracquemond, *On the Terrace at Sèvres*, oil on canvas, 1880, oil on canvas, 88 x 115 cm, Musée du Petit Palais, Geneva

Contemporaries noted this introspective quality. In a 1916 *Le Figaro* article marking Marie's death, Arsène Alexandre remarked on 'the voluntary shadow into which this talent withdrew' and her 'excessive humility.' Gustave Geffroy, who was close to Marie, wrote in the preface to her 1919 posthumous exhibition about her fragile health and her husband's difficult nature. Félix Bracquemond, a well-known but conservative artist, increasingly resisted his wife's shift from academicism to Impressionism, contributing to her decision to step back from public life.

In 1928, art historian Henri Focillon recognized Marie as one of 'les trois grandes dames' of Impressionism, alongside Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt. Although not as well-known today as her peers, Marie's unique contributions to Impressionism (fig. 2) are being rediscovered, with several of her works recently having been acquired by the Musée d'Orsay.

Born in Argenton, Brittany, to a modest family, Marie's early life was marked by instability following her father's death and her mother's remarriage. Her early life therefore contrasts sharply with the cultured, prosperous, stable milieu of Cassatt, Morisot and Eva Gonzalez. Marie began painting in her teens and in 1857 had a work accepted by the Salon. She later studied under Ingres and gained recognition for commissions, including one from Empress Eugénie.

Marie met Félix while copying works in the Louvre, and they married in 1869. They worked together at the Haviland studio, where she designed plates and tiles. Although she had

some success with etchings, she eventually embraced Impressionism, influenced by Monet, Degas, and Gauguin. Her use of vibrant colours and outdoor scenes marked a shift in her style, much to her husband's disapproval.

Marie exhibited at the Impressionist exhibitions of 1879, 1880, and 1886, and also in London in 1881. Despite her talents, Félix often undermined her work, and by 1890, worn down by his opposition and lack of recognition, she largely stopped painting, except for a few private works. She died in Paris in 1916.