

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Adeline Caillot, Second half of the 19th century

Portrait of Mlle L.L., 1879

Signed middle right: *A. Caillot*

Charcoal and white chalk on paper mounted on canvas, signed centre right. Stamp on the canvas: 'H. Blanchet / Paris / 17 / rue de Grenelle St Germain'.

Original frame with a label with n°327 (last number missing)

65 x 56 cm (25 19/32 x 22 1/16 in.) with frame 75 x 62 cm (29 17/32 x 24 13/32)

Literature:

Annuaire des beaux-arts et des arts décoratifs, Paris 1879, under no. 3271.

Exhibited:

Paris, *Salon of 1879*, 'Portrait de Mlle L.L.', no. 3271.



This exquisite *Portrait of Mlle L.L.* executed in charcoal and white chalk in 1879, demonstrates Adeline Caillot's mastery of tonal contrast and detail. The sitter, directly facing the viewer, is framed against an unadorned, dark background, allowing her figure to dominate the composition. Her facial features are rendered with smooth tones of charcoal, while the use of white chalk brings subtle luminosity to her complexion, creating an elegant *chiaroscuro* effect. The same medium is used by Caillot to depict the details of her sober attire, especially her intricate ruffled collar, contrasting with the deep, almost velvety blackness of her clothing. The floral motive at her neck draws attention to the centre of the composition, its placement reinforcing the sitter's dignified poise. Caillot's treatment of texture shows a keen observational eye. The rendering of her soft waves of hair is meticulous, with fine strands indicated through light strokes of charcoal. The expression on the sitter's face is calm, her gaze direct but restrained. While this pose embodies a sense of formality typical of the portraiture of the period, Caillot elevated the present work to a meticulous study of personality and social presence.

Adeline Caillot was born in Paris in the second half of the 19th century. She was among the very first students to join the free drawing school for girls, founded by Louise Thoret in 1864. Madame Thoret's school, located at that time in the 14th arrondissement, played a pivotal role in the education of young female artists and remained a major centre for artistic training until the turn of the century.¹ Adeline Caillot took part to the 1869 exhibition held at the Palais de l'Industrie, organised by the Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l'Industrie, exhibiting whilst still a student of Madame Thoret's school.² At the 1877 Salon, Caillot presented an exquisite painting on porcelain titled *Une dormeuse*, after Victor Joseph Charvet (fig. 1). The artist and critic Théodore Véron (1820-1898) praised her work as being 'well executed and modelled, with nice tones'.³ In 1879, she took part to the Salon for the second time, exhibiting the present drawing. Ultimately, she appears to have focussed on painting on porcelain, as her name was registered in the 1879 *Annuaire des Beaux-arts et des arts décoratifs* under this category.⁴

¹ L. Etienne, 'L'École gratuite de jeunes filles de Louise Thoret. Monographie d'une QuiDame de l'enseignement de la rue Madame', *Hypotheses*, June 5, 2022 <https://doi.org/10.58079/vn67>

² Union centrale des Beaux-arts appliqués à l'Industrie, *Catalogue des écoles de dessin et Supplément au catalogue des oeuvres et des produits modernes: exposition de 1869*, Paris (Palais de l'Industrie) 1869.

³ T. Veron, *Dictionnaire Véron, ou mémorial de l'art et des artistes de mon temps*, Paris 1877, p. 164.

⁴ *Annuaire des beaux-arts et des arts décoratifs*, Paris 1879.



Fig. 1, Adeline Caillot, *Une Dormeuse* (after Victor Joseph Chavet), 1877, hand-painted porcelain plaque, 26.2 x 20.3 cm, Private collection.