

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Joseph-Auguste Brunier
(Chambéry 1860 – Lyon 1929)

Portrait of the artist's daughter, Françoise Brunier

Stamped lower left with the mark of the artist's studio sale (Lugt 5806) and lower right with the collector's mark of Étienne Grafe (Lugt 3927)

Black chalk with white highlights

32.5 x 25.3 cm.

Provenance:

By descent in the family of the artist, Lyon;

Until their studio sale, 1980;

Etienne Grafe collection, Lyon;

Michel Descours, Paris, 2025.



This sensitive and finely observed portrait depicts the artist's daughter Françoise, one of Joseph-Auguste Brunier's most frequent and cherished models. Executed in black chalk with delicate white highlights, the drawing reveals Brunier's mastery of tonal modelling and his ability to convey both physical presence and quiet psychological depth. The child's direct gaze, softened by subtle shading around the eyes and mouth, lends the work an intimate and contemplative character, typical of the artist's family portraits.

Brunier trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Lyon under Michel Dumas, winning the gold medal in 1883 before receiving the Prix de Paris in 1885. This distinction allowed him to continue his studies in Paris in the ateliers of Alexandre Cabanel, Jules Lefebvre and Gustave Boulanger. He exhibited regularly at both the Lyon and Paris Salons between 1885 and 1890, presenting painted and drawn portraits as well as religious compositions.

Although Brunier produced several important religious works, including commissions for churches in Lyon, portraiture formed the core of his artistic output. Following his marriage in 1891, his wife and daughter became his preferred subjects, and he portrayed them repeatedly in different media. A gifted draughtsman, Brunier worked fluently in black chalk, charcoal, red chalk, pastel and silverpoint, the latter medium represented by a particularly fine portrait of his wife now in the Fondation Custodia, Paris.

The present drawing remained in the artist's family until the dispersal of his estate in 1980, after which it entered the collection of Étienne Grafe, one of Lyon's most distinguished collectors and art historians. Its preservation, provenance and quality make it a compelling example of late nineteenth-century French portrait drawing, combining academic refinement with genuine familial intimacy.



Fig. 1, Auguste-Joseph Brunier, *Portrait of a lady in a hat*, oil on canvas, 65 x 54 cm, Tomaselli Collection



Fig. 2, Auguste-Joseph Brunier, *Portrait of the artist's wife*, metal point, pencil and red chalk 26.9 x 18.7 cm, Fondation Custodia