

ELLIOTT FINE ART

Nineteenth Century to Early Modern

Louise Lagerheim von Knorring
(Stockholm 1819 – 1905)

A study of Chactas, from Girodet's The Burial of Attala

Signed and dated lower right: *Louise Lagerheim. / 1837.*

Inscribed at centre: *CHACTAS*

Black chalk on paper

46 x 55 cm. (17 ¾ x 21 in.)

Provenance:

Gifted by the artist to her daughter, Sigrid von Knorring, 1871;

Thence by descent, until;

Höors Auktionshall, Hör, Sweden, 21 August 2024, lot 8012.



Louise Lagerheim's study, drawn when she was just seventeen, depicts Chactas, a Seminole Indian and the main character in Chateaubriand's novella *Atala*, published in 1803. Chactas mourning the death of Atala, at the story's climax, was famously painted by Anne-Louis Girodet (fig. 1) in 1808. The painting, exhibited to great acclaim at the Salon that year, is a key transitional work, displaying both Neoclassical and proto-Romantic elements.



Fig.1 Anne-Louis Girodet, *The Burial of Atala*, 1808, oil on canvas, 207 x 267, Musée du Louvre

Lagerheim's drawing is a copy of Lepage and Reverdin's 1812 lithograph (fig. 2), which itself was based on Girodet's portrayal of the grieving Chactas. Copying details of famous works via lithographs was a standard component of an artist's training in the European academies of the time. Given her age, Lagerheim's drawing was likely completed in an academic setting. Another copy of the lithograph is known and was drawn by the Belgian artist Jean Hanssens (fig. 3) in 1818. This won him a first-prize whilst a student at the Bruges Academy of Fine Arts, though Lagerheim's version is no less accomplished.



Fig.2, Lepage and Réverdin, *Chactas*, 1812, lithograph, 53.5 x 71 cm, Musée d'Art et Histoire, Geneva



Fig.3, Jean Hanssens, *Chactas*, 1818, black chalk on paper, 48.5 x 59 cm, Musea Brugge

Although the Swedish Royal Academy did not officially admit women until 1864, some were granted special permission to study there before this date. Lagerheim may have been one

such exception: her teenage technical proficiency would have made her competitive in that context. Lagerheim exhibited at the Royal Academy's 1838 exhibition, displaying a copy after Ary Scheffer in black chalk, further suggesting that she may have been studying there at this time.

Lagerheim (fig. 4), the second of six children, was the daughter of Olof Johan Lagerheim, a nobleman and Supreme Court Justice, and Emerentia Frigell. Her father died in the cholera epidemic of 1834. In 1847, she married Chancellor Jacob Henrik Edvard von Knorring, a member of an old Baltic German noble family. Lagerheim was also a talented pianist and singer. She was elected an associate of the Academy of Music in 1866.



Fig.4, Maria Röhl, *Portrait of Louise Lagerheim*, 1836, 27 x 21 cm, pencil on paper, Swedish National Library

Beyond *Chactas*, Lagerheim's known corpus of graphic works is very small, consisting of three bust-length portraits in the Swedish National Museum and one similar work in the Grenna Museum.