

French School, 18th Century

Dancing Couple (recto), Various Sketches (verso), c. 1770

Red chalk on paper

Verso: Black chalk and red chalk

34 x 21 cm

Provenance:

Lucien Wolff, Paris

Private collection, Paris

This elegant and dynamic drawing, executed in red chalk, exemplifies the refined and expressive draughtsmanship of the French school in the mid-18th century. The subject, a couple engaged in a lively dance, is captured with remarkable immediacy, suggesting an *étude prise sur le vif*, a study drawn from life. The fluidity of the lines, the soft modeling of the drapery, and the subtle interplay of light and shadow convey both movement and grace, hallmarks of the Rococo aesthetic.

Although the attribution remains uncertain, the name of **Hubert Robert (1733–1808)** has been frequently associated with this work. Robert, best known for his romantic landscapes and architectural capricci, was also a highly skilled draughtsman who trained at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture and studied in Rome at the French Academy. His sketches often reveal a similar sense of spontaneity and narrative charm. However, the stylistic similarities with the works of artists such as **Jean-Baptiste-Marie Pierre (1714–1789)** or **Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724–1780)** suggest that this drawing could belong to a broader circle of 18th-century French artists who favored the use of sanguine for rapid yet refined studies.

The verso, containing additional sketches in black and red chalk, provides further insight into the artist's working process, reinforcing the notion of a preparatory study rather than a finished composition. This type of drawing would have served as a preliminary exploration for a larger painting or decorative project, in line with the Rococo fascination with movement, festivity, and the depiction of aristocratic leisure.