

RÖBBIG · MÜNCHEN

Frühe Porzellane · Kunsthandel



“THE LOVE LETTER”

JEAN-BAPTISTE MALLET (1759-1835)

Circa: 1780

Brown ink and water-colour on paper

Height 32.4 cm, width 22.9 cm

This picture shows a genre scene set in a neoclassical interior. We see two ladies, one seated on a chair with a letter in her hand, while the other stands looking at her companion, her hands folded one over the other. Both ladies are elegantly dressed and each wears an elaborate hat on her presumably carefully coiffed hair. The room appears to be a small oval salon furnished entirely in the style of Louis XVI.

Little is known about the person Jean Baptiste Mallet (1759-1835). He initially trained under Simon Julien in Toulon, later moving to Pierre-Paul Prid'hon in Paris. He exhibited at every Salon between 1793 and 1827, winning the second class medal in 1812 and the first class medal in 1817.

Only few portraits by this artist are known, as he preferred to paint elegant neoclassical scenes. He achieved a degree of fame above all through his scenes of society, painted in gouache, which not seldom were of a fashionable or libertine nature: always elegant and at the same time refined in the style of Louis-Philibert Debucourt and Louis-Léopold Boilly and remarkable for the brilliance and delicacy of the brushwork. These paintings reveal Mallet's study of the Dutch painting from the 17th century, indicated in particular by numerous details such as the transparency and translucence of crystal or the glowing materiality of satin and silk.

Mallet's meticulously precise pictures are among the best visual sources for information about the furnishings and interior decoration of the time. They were extremely popular and were also available in the form of prints.

Further paintings by Mallet are to be found in the Musée Cognacq-Jay, Paris; the Forsyth Wickes Collection, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

