



"L'AMOUR AU PETIT-POINTE"

JEAN-BAPTISTE MALLET (1759-1835)

Circa: 1790

Gouache on paper

Height 25 cm, width 32.2 cm

This picture shows a genre scene in a neoclassical interior. We see five ladies elegantly engaged in passing their time by doing embroidery and finishing fabrics. The furnishings of the tall, grey-panelled room are in the style of Louis XVI. On a chair in the right-hand foreground of the picture sits a lapdog of a kind particularly popular around this time. In terms of composition this picture is very similar to another work by Mallet known as "La Jolie Visiteuse" from the Forsyth Wickes Collection in New York.

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.

