

RÖBBIG · MÜNCHEN

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“ELEGANT SOCIETY IN A PARK”

JEAN-BAPTISTE MALLET (1759-1835)

Circa: 1790

Gouache and water-colour on paper

Height 30 cm, width 23.2 cm

The present picture depicts a genre scene set outdoors, most probably in a landscaped park. In the foreground is a group of four persons: a lady seated on a chair, to her right stands a young lady holding a large pink parasol, beside her is a dog. On the left-hand side of the picture is an intimately acquainted couple, she is seated on bench, he rests on the ground. In the background, spatially separated by a balustrade, we can make out a further group engaged in conversation.

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.

