



Charles Chaplin

1825-1891

Jeu de Lotto

Oil on canvas / signed lower left

Dimensions : 18,5 x 14,4 cm

Dimensions : 7.09 x 5.51 inch

## Biography

Charles Chaplin was long underestimated in the history of 19th-century French painting. A painter of figures, portraits and genre scenes, he stood at the crossroads of late Romanticism and nascent Realism, developing a body of work marked by great psychological sensitivity and a keen sense of human observation.

Born in Paris on 8 June 1825 into a modest family, Charles Chaplin entered the École des Beaux-Arts at a very young age, where he was admitted to the studio of Michel-Martin Drolling, then François-Édouard Picot, two major figures in academic teaching under the July Monarchy. This rigorous training gave him a solid technical mastery, particularly in drawing and modelling, which would remain one of the foundations of his art. From his earliest works, Chaplin revealed a pronounced taste for female figures, treated with elegance and restraint, far from any superfluous anecdote.

He made his debut at the Paris Salon in 1847, where he exhibited regularly until the 1880s. Very early on, critics noted the delicacy of his touch and the intimate atmosphere of his compositions. Unlike many of his contemporaries who were seduced by monumental history painting, Chaplin favoured more modest formats and subjects drawn from everyday life or poetic imagination: dreamy young women, musicians, readers, discreet allegories and sentimental scenes. This aesthetic orientation, sometimes considered too intimate by official critics, nevertheless helped to establish his reputation among a cultured and loyal public.

From the 1850s onwards, Chaplin enjoyed growing success. He received several distinctions at the Salon, including medals in 1851, 1853 and 1865, and gained institutional recognition, culminating in his appointment as a Knight of the Legion of Honour in 1879. His work was appreciated for its refinement, subtle palette and ability to suggest emotions without emphasis. The softness of his colours and his attention to texture - pearly skin tones, delicate fabrics, muted backgrounds - testify to his profound mastery of his art.

Alongside his career as a painter, Charles Chaplin played an important role as an educator, notably as a drawing teacher at the École Polytechnique and as a private tutor. He trained many students, including several female artists, at a time when their access to academic education remained limited. This aspect of his work contributed to his lasting influence on the Parisian art scene.

At the end of his life, when Impressionist and Naturalist movements dominated the artistic debate, Chaplin's work appeared more discreet, sometimes relegated to the background by modernist historiography. Yet his painting remains a valuable testimony to another kind of modernity: that of intimacy, silence and measured elegance. Charles Chaplin died in Paris on 30 January 1891, leaving behind a coherent and refined body of work, now rediscovered and appreciated for its pictorial quality and sensitive view of the human figure.

## Museums

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Petit Palais, Paris

Musées des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, Reims, Rouen, Lille, Bordeaux

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires

Hermitage, Saint Petersburg

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

## Bibliography

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Schurr & Cabanne, " Dictionnaire des Petits Maîtres de la peinture, 1820-1920 ", ed. del'Amateur, 1999

Breton J., " Nos peintres du Siècle ", Revue des Deux Mondes, 1899

Coutts Howard, " The Road to Impressionism, Josephine Bowes in 19th Century France ", Barnard Castle, The Bowes Museum