

[Picking Fruits - Original Drypoint Etching](#) , (circa 1933) by [Louis Icart](#)
Etching - Main Subject: Portrait



Item Number
2301415556

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Dimensions (As Shown)
12.75W x 9.5H Inches
32.38W x 24.13H cm

Medium
Etching

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About Louis Icart

Louis Icart, French (1880 - 1950) was born in Toulouse, France. He began drawing at an early age. He was particularly interested in fashion, and became famous for his sketches almost immediately. He worked for major design studios at a time when fashion was undergoing a radical change—from the fussiness of the late nineteenth century to the simple, clingy lines of the early twentieth century. He was first son of Jean and Elisabeth Icart and was officially named Louis Justin Laurent Icart. The use of his initials L.I. would be sufficient in this household. Therefore, from the moment of his birth he was dubbed 'Helli'. The Icart family lived modestly in a small brick home on rue Traversière-de-la-balance, in the culturally rich Southern French city of Toulouse, which was the home of many prominent writers and artists, the most famous being Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

Icart fought in World War I. He relied on his art to stem his anguish, sketching on every available surface. It was not until his move to Paris in 1907 that Icart would concentrate on painting, drawing and the production of countless beautiful etchings, which have served (more than the other mediums) to indelibly preserve his name in twentieth century art history. When he returned from the front he made prints from those drawings. The prints, most of which were aquatints and drypoints, showed great skill. Because they were much in demand, Icart frequently made two editions (one European, the other American) to satisfy his public. These prints are considered rare today, and when they are in mint condition they fetch high prices at auction.

Art Deco, a term coined at the 1925 Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs, had taken its grip on the Paris of the 1920s. By the late 1920s Icart, working for both publications and major fashion and design studios, had become very successful, both artistically and financially. His etchings reached their height of brilliance in this era of Art Deco, and Icart had become the symbol of the epoch. Yet, although Icart has created for us a picture of Paris and New York life in the 1920s and 1930s, he worked in his own style, derived principally from the study of eighteenth-century French masters such as Jean Antoine Watteau, François Boucher and Jean Honoré Fragonard.

In Icart's drawings, one sees the Impressionists Degas and Monet and, in his rare watercolors, the Symbolists Odilon Redon and Gustave Moreau. In fact, Icart lived outside the fashionable artistic movements of the time and was not completely sympathetic to contemporary art. Nonetheless, his Parisian scenes are a documentation of the life he saw around him and they are nearly as popular today as when they were first produced.

In 1914 Icart had met a magical, effervescent eighteen-year-old blonde named Fanny Volmers, at the time an employee of the fashion house Paquin. She would eventually become his wife and a source of artistic inspiration for the rest of his life.

Etching

Etching is the process of using strong acid or mordant to cut into the unprotected parts of a metal surface to create a design in intaglio in the metal (the original process in modern manufacturing other chemicals may be used on other types of material). As an intaglio method of printmaking it is, along with engraving, the most important technique for old master prints, and remains widely used today.

In pure etching, a metal plate is covered with a waxy ground which is resistant to acid. The artist then scratches off the ground with a pointed etching needle where he or she wants a line to appear in the finished piece, so exposing the bare metal. The echoppe, a tool with a slanted oval section is also used for swelling lines. The plate is then dipped in a bath of acid, technically called the mordant (French for biting), or has acid washed over it. The acid bites into the metal, where it is exposed, leaving behind lines sunk into the plate. The remaining ground is then cleaned off the plate. The plate is inked all over, and then the ink wiped off the surface, leaving only the ink in the etched lines.

The plate is then put through a high-pressure printing press together with a sheet of paper (often moistened to soften it). The paper picks up the ink from the etched lines, making a print. The process can be repeated many times; typically several hundred impressions could be printed before the plate shows much sign of wear. The work on the plate can also be added to by repeating the whole process; this creates an etching which exists in more than one state.

Etching has often been combined with other intaglio techniques such as engraving e.g. Rembrandt or aquatint e.g. Goya.

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