

KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts

Franz von Bayros

1866 Zagreb - 1924 Vienna

After completing his studies at the Vienna Academy Franz von Bayros trained at the Academy of Art in Munich. He settled in Vienna in 1890, where his aristocratic family background and connections to the higher echelons of Austrian society secured him numerous portrait commissions. He married the stepdaughter of the composer Johann Strauss but their acrimonious divorce brought his promising career as a portraitist to an abrupt end in 1896. He moved to Munich to avoid the venomous attacks of his all-powerful former in-laws and forged a successful new career as a designer of elegant bookplates, and illustrator of erotic books and portfolios. In 1911, charges of obscenity were brought against him and he was obliged to leave Munich. He returned to Vienna, where he failed to repeat the successes of his Munich years.



Franz von Bayros, 1898

The focus of Bayros's *oeuvre* is on female beauty in its many manifestations – deceptively innocent young women and girls, manipulative temptresses and *femmes fatales*. Although raciness and frivolity are constant themes in his work, none of his playfully stylised, highly ornamental drawings and watercolours are used to mirror voyeurism, vulgarity or coarse male fantasies. On the contrary, his female figures in their extravagant rococo costumes and stylish *belle époque* dresses seem to play the role of sophisticated seductresses. This they owe to his artistic sensibility and feeling for elegance although they are coloured by a certain satirical if not ironical touch. The delicacy of his line, his virtuoso use of wash and his extraordinary compositional skills heighten the grace and allure of his figures. His drawings epitomize *fin-de-siècle* femininity in all its fashionable decadence.