



Rafael de Ochoa y Madrazo

(Madrid 1858 - ? after 1934)

Portrait of Paul-César Helleu

painting a Dish next to a Model (circa 1885)

Graphite and stump on two sheets of a sketchbook

8 1/2'' x 13 3/8'' (21.5 x 34 cm) - Framed: 14 3/4'' x 19 1/2'' (37.5 x 49.5 cm)

Signed lower left

Provenance:

Collin Delavaud Collection, France

Private collection, Paris (by descent)

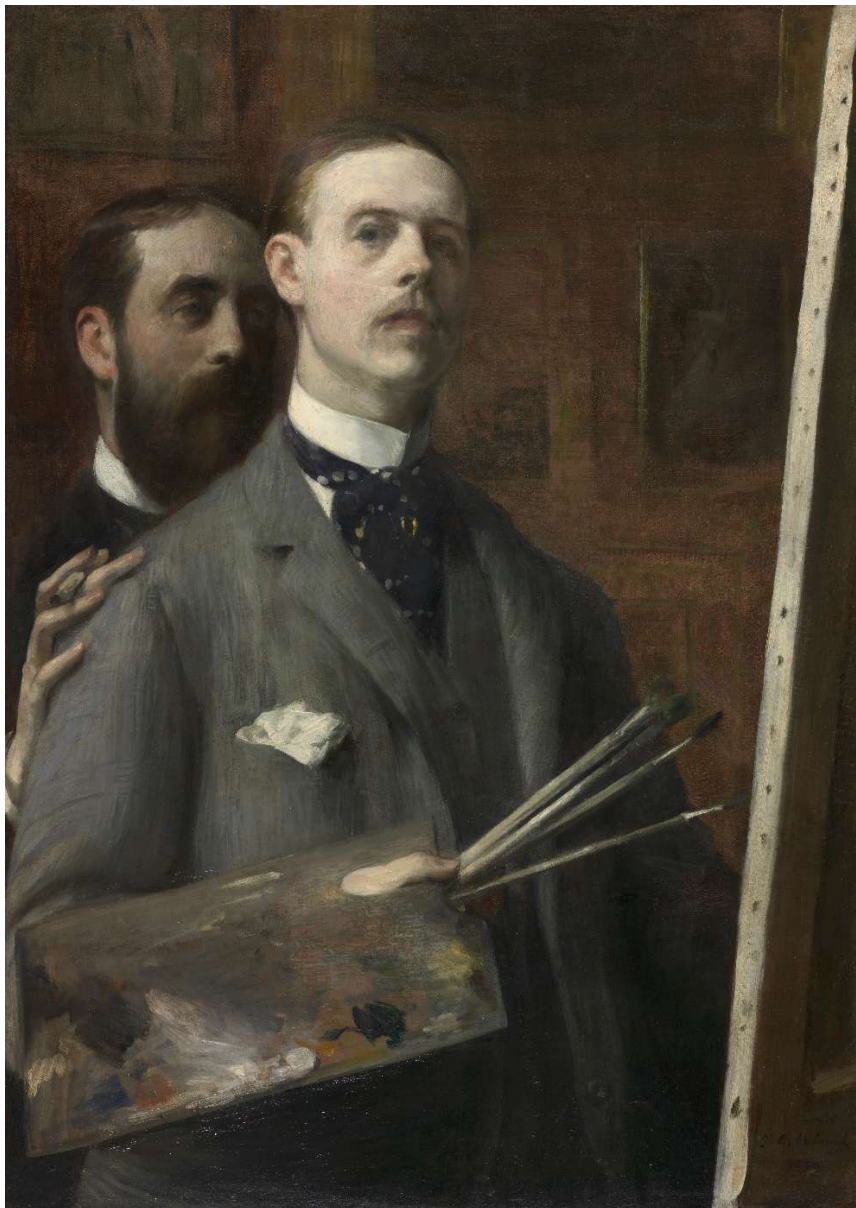
"Degas" style frame, in natural wood with gold trim around the view - France, early 20th century

Price upon request

This lively drawing immerses us in the artistic world of Paris at the end of the 19th century. After meeting the painter Helleu in 1881, Rafael de Ochoa y Madrazo, a young Spanish painter, shared a studio with him for some time. Helleu painted his first portraits there, as well as numerous dishes for Théodore Deck (as shown in our drawing), but it was mainly in this studio that, thanks to Ochoa, he met Alice Louis-Guérin, who would become his wife in 1886.

Rafael de Ochoa was also a close friend of the painter Jacque Emile Blanche, who depicted him alongside himself in his enigmatic *Self-Portrait* of 1890...

1. Rafael de Ochoa y Madrazo or the friendships of a young Spanish painter in Paris



Jacques-Emile Blanche - *Self-portrait with Rafael de Ochoa* (1890) - 1980.230 The Cleveland Museum of Art

Rafael de Ochoa was the son of writer and art critic Eugenio de Ochoa (author of numerous articles published in *El Artista*), who had married a sister of the portrait painter Federico de Madrazo, an artist whose family dominated the Spanish art scene in the 19th century¹. Being born into such a family allowed him to enjoy a remarkable literary education from childhood, a careful upbringing, and the opportunity to learn painting from members of his mother's family, the Madrazos. Ochoa y Madrazo was initially a pupil of Raimundo Madrazo. He then entered the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he completed his training in the studio of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904).

Around 1881-1882, he became friends with two young painters of his generation who would both go on to become great portraitists: Jacques-Emile Blanche (1861-1942) and Paul Helleu (1859-1927)². His close friendship with Blanche, who painted him on numerous occasions, led him to visit Madrid with him in 1884, which was immortalized in the particularly ambiguous double portrait of 1890 reproduced above. Blanche and Ochoa made several other trips together. In the autumn of that same year, 1890, they visited Switzerland and Italy, accompanied by the painter Boldini. In July 1891, they stayed in London, this time accompanied by Helleu and Boldini.



Paul-César Helleu – *Portrait of Rafael Ochoa y Madrazo* (circa 1885) – whereabouts unknown

¹ While their father José de Madrazo y Agudo was a painter and director of the Prado, Federico's brother Luis and his sons Ricardo and Raimundo were also renowned painters. His daughter Cecilia married the Orientalist painter Marià Fortuny.

² On November 13, 1881, Helleu wrote to his mother: "I have a commission for five hundred francs that Ochoa brought me yesterday morning. He is a very wealthy gentleman who saw my painting and whom he meets in a very wealthy family where he often goes and where he is to introduce me." Helleu, Ochoa, and Blanche then stayed together in Dieppe in August 1882.

Paul Helleu also trained in the studio of the painter Gérôme, which he joined in 1876. It was through Ochoa, whom he met in 1881 and with whom he later shared a studio, that he was introduced to the Louis-Guérin family, for whom he painted (at his request) the portrait of their daughter Alice³. Helleu fell in love with the beautiful Alice, then aged 14, and married her in 1886. He depicted Ochoa in a pencil portrait dated 1884 (listed in the catalogue raisonné under reference DE5-8575) but above all in the superb gouache (TM4-8557) reproduced above, which shows him in their studio. These two works also belonged to the Collin Delavaud couple, who were among Helleu's first collectors before becoming loyal friends.

Ochoa y Madrazo, fascinated by the artistic atmosphere of Paris, lived in the French capital for many years and many of his best works are kept in private collections and French museums. He took part in the Paris Fine Arts Exhibition in 1879 and the Paris World's Fairs in 1885 and 1889.

On his return to Spain, he became a pupil of his uncle, Federico de Madrazo, with whom he perfected his portrait technique, following the models of classical realism, with a certain influence from French post-romanticism. Like most painters of his time, Ochoa y Madrazo also distinguished himself in history painting. The exact place and date of his death are unknown, but it was certainly after 1934⁴.

2. A little-known aspect of Helleu's work: his collaboration with the Deck brothers

In this drawing executed on two pages of a sketchbook, Ochoa depicts his friend Paul Helleu, presumably in their studio, brush in hand, painting a portrait of a woman on what is most likely a plate by Théodore Deck. A young woman, also seated on the same sofa as the artist, leans forward to look at the portrait, of which she is very likely the model.

The technique used, consisting of parallel pencil strokes of varying intensity, unified by a smudging technique, reveals the influence of Whistler, another friend of Helleu and Blanche.

The son of a silk dyer in Guebwiller, Théodore Deck joined the master stove maker Hügelin in Strasbourg in 1841 and arrived in Paris in 1847 after a long journey through Germany, Austria, and Hungary. He was hired as a foreman in December 1851 by the widow Dumas, daughter of the faience maker Vogt, for whom he had worked when he arrived in Paris. In 1858, he and his brother set up their own company specializing in stove coverings. The success of their business enabled them to quickly branch out into ceramics for building coverings and shaped pieces.

Théodore Deck often called on artists to decorate dishes, tiles, and plates, dividing the proceeds from sales equally between them. This is how, in 1881, Paul Helleu began a collaboration that would last at least until his marriage in 1886, or even (according to the painter Blanche) for around ten years. The pieces we have been able to find (the online

³ "My maternal grandparents commissioned a Spanish painter, Rafaël de Ochoa, recommended by Emmanuel Chabrier, to paint a portrait of their eldest daughter. When she went to the sittings, she was accompanied by her mother and her little sister Alice, aged fourteen and a half, with abundant golden red hair that fell to her knees. Paul Helleu, who shared Ochoa's studio, was captivated by the young Alice and asked to paint her portrait. Helleu fell madly in love with her and could think of nothing else! A year later, they were engaged." **Paulette Howard-Johnson *Helleu and his models***

⁴ There is a portrait by Blanche depicting him in 1934 at the age of 78 (RM1048).

catalogue raisonné of Helleu's ceramic work is not yet available) generally depict busts of women standing out against a strong-colored background.



Paul-César Helleu (in collaboration with Théodore Deck)

Circular plate decorated with a Portrait of a Woman with a Pink Ribbon – Stéphane Renard Fine Art

Depicted here at around 25 years of age, Helleu would retain the same appearance for much of his life, as evidenced by this etching by Boldini in 1902.



Boldini – Portrait of Paul-César Helleu (1902) – NPG6031 – National Portrait Gallery London

3. Framing

We have chosen to present this magnificent portrait in a "Degas" style frame, made of natural wood with a gold finish around the image (early 20th century France). This type of frame was invented by the painter Degas (an artist who was close to Blanche for a time before their memorable falling out and whom Ochoa most likely met during his stay in Paris) to frame the drawings in his collection in a modern way.



Rafael de Ochoa y Madrazo - Portrait of Paul-César Helleu painting a Dish next to a Model

Main bibliographical references:

Edited by **Frédérique de Watrigant** *Paul-César Helleu* Paris 2014

Les amis de Paul-César Helleu *Online catalogue raisonné*

Jane Roberts – *Jacques-Emile Blanche* – Gourcuff Gradenico 2012

Jane Roberts and Muriel Molines *Jacques-Emile Blanche catalogue raisonné online*