

**The Adroit Princess**  
**Marie Laurencin's Prints and Book Illustrations**

curated by Jelena Kristic  
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Galerie Buchholz is pleased to present its second exhibition dedicated to Marie Laurencin (1883-1956). This survey, featuring approximately 60 prints, many of which are hand-colored and rare impressions, and 30 illustration projects, charts Laurencin's longstanding engagement with printmaking from 1904 until the year of her death in 1956. In her lifetime, Laurencin produced approximately 300 prints, the majority of which illustrated more than eighty publications. From this prodigious output, we can observe the formation and function of Laurencin's near-exclusive subject, the *jeune fille*, or young woman. In creating her clichéd *jeune fille*, Laurencin drew on a variety of female stereotypes from nineteenth-century literature and popular print culture, such as those of the working-class girl (*la grisette*), the street prostitute (*la lorette*), the kept woman (*la courtisane*), and the coquettish ladies of Épinal prints and fashion plates. A selection of these nineteenth-century materials is displayed in the Antiquariat Buchholz store window.

Laurencin created her first print in 1904, the same year she began studying painting at the Académie Humbert. Produced in a style quite different from her paintings at the time, these early prints refer to mythological, historical, and literary personages, such as Salomé, Bilitis, Diana the Huntress and Diane de Poitiers, and double as self-portraits of the artist. Like all the female figures in Laurencin's prints, they closely resemble each other and are only identifiable by the titles Laurencin gave the respective works. Laurencin was not interested in realism or resemblance but in flattened, interchangeable, and homogenized representations of women that could be repeatedly reproduced and refer back to herself as the artist. As printmaking and illustration were considered secondary to painting and writing, the print medium aligned literally and symbolically with reproducing the *jeune fille* and Laurencin's interest in portraying secondary roles - the woman-artist, the muse, the courtesan, the princess - to further reinforce her entire practice's programmatic strategy of generating a space of self-determination from within a position of staged subordination. The title of this exhibition is taken from a title of a fable that Laurencin chose to illustrate in 1928. Originally written in 1696 by the *précieuse* Marie-Jeanne l'Héritier de Villandon, the tale of "The Adroit Princess, or the Adventures of Finette" became a popular illustration subject, commonly depicted in Épinal prints throughout the nineteenth century. The princess Finette embodies the ideal of feminine wile and outsmarts her way to happiness by following the maxim that "distrust is the mother of security." As in her other illustrations, Laurencin's lithographs for *L'Adroite princesse* do not serve to identify specific characters but manifest the staged simplicity of l'Héritier's text structure and the tale's counsel of practicing deception. Just as Finette deceives others with her faux naïve performance, Laurencin's illustrations act like decoys, inducing the viewer to reconsider the innocence of the *jeune fille*.

Because of the multiple parties involved in making a book, especially the luxurious *livre d'artiste*, Laurencin's illustration projects illuminate her ability to navigate diverse networks. In 1912, Laurencin began a longstanding printmaking collaboration with Jean-Emile Laboureur, who helped shape Laurencin's storybook aesthetic. Eugene Figuière commissioned Laurencin's first book illustrations for the popular *Les Petits livres d'heures* series at the same time as he published Guillaume Apollinaire's *Les Peintres cubistes* (1913). During World War I in Barcelona, Francis Picabia and Laurencin edited the first four issues of *391* together, to which Laurencin contributed poems and artwork. Published by Gallimard in 1922, *Éventail* offers a strong example of Laurencin's *jeune fille* in action, featuring Laurencin's ten small, engraved portraits of young women accompanying ten texts by different male writer friends penned in homage to Laurencin and her return to Paris. Mimicking the way Gavarni's *grisette* embodies a generalized conception of a particular woman, Laurencin's portraits in *Éventail* are pantomimes of the muse, proxies for herself both defined by others' reception of her and fashioned by her.

A selection of Laurencin's other *livres d'artistes* demonstrates a hybridity of the popular and avant-garde: Marcel Jouhandeau's twist on Sleeping Beauty, Jacques de Lacretelle's portrait of a courtesan's childhood, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, René Crevel's elegy to the Brontë sisters, Katherine Mansfield's short stories, Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, and *Poèmes de Sapho*, translated by Édith de Beaumont. The prints produced outside of Laurencin's book illustration projects after 1920 comprise about a third of her total graphic output and track those of her books in style and subject. These independent prints were sold through galleries and print dealers, most important among them Galerie Flechtheim, Le Nouvel Essor, and Henri Marie Petiet.