

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM
FINE ARTS

DANIEL CHODOWIECKI

Dantzig 1726 – Berlin 1801
German School

FAMILY GATHERING IN CANDLELIGHT

Watercolour on paper
H. 200 mm; W. 145 mm
Date: 1758-1761
Inscription on the back of the old mount:
*La famille du Ing[enieur] Cent
O farhat [?] ancien Cap du génie
acheté en janvier 1815*

DATE: 1758-1761

PROVENANCE:
Private collection, France

A German draughtsman and printmaker, Daniel Chodowiecki specialized in small format works and vignettes for illustrations. Born of a French mother and a Polish father in Dantzig (Gdansk today), he received initial training in miniature from his father and his aunt. In 1743, he followed his brother and settled in Berlin where he first concentrated on creating enamel miniatures to decorate snuffboxes made by his uncle. In 1755 he married Jeanne Barez, leading to him forming close links with the French community in Berlin, which was a major source of commissions. Chodowiecki made commitments and took on responsibilities within this community, of which he became treasurer. In 1771 he expressed his desire “to be made French”.¹ The couple had five children, three of whom had artistic careers.² Chodowiecki was primarily self-taught; he learned to work with oil and became a member of the Berlin royal academy of painting in 1764. He was involved in the reforms of his academy and exhibited regularly there. In 1797 he became its director. His paintings, which were not numerous, were gradually overtaken by his activity as a printmaker and illustrator.

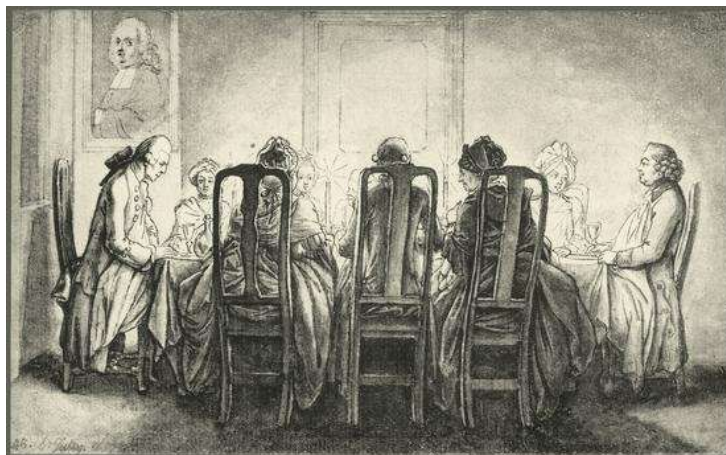
During the years 1758-1761, Chodowiecki created a series of dated drawings that show friends and members of his family during a convivial evening, most of the time around a table at a time of the year when night falls very early. For most of these drawings, he worked with graphite, but sometimes a brush and brown wash is applied. Our drawing shows a family of the French community in Berlin. Chodowiecki is an extraordinary chronicler of bourgeois life in Berlin during the second half of the 18th century. He was a fascinated observer and his many studies are sketched furtively from life and, as much as possible, without the knowledge of the people

¹ Wolfgang von Oettingen, *Daniel Chodowiecki. Ein Berliner Künstlerleben im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1895, p. 263, note 42.

² Wolfgang von Oettingen, *Daniel Chodowiecki. Ein Berliner Künstlerleben im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1895, p. 263, note 42.

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depicted. According to him, as soon as his models realized they were being drawing, they would take on artificial poses that spoiled everything.³



An evening gathering at Pastor Bocquet's, 1773, brush, brown and black ink, wash, H. 112 mm; W. 183 mm, Berlin, Akademie der Künste

³ Wolfgang von Oettingen, *Daniel Chodowiecki. Ein Berliner Künstlerleben im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1895, p. 63-64.