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EST. 1817

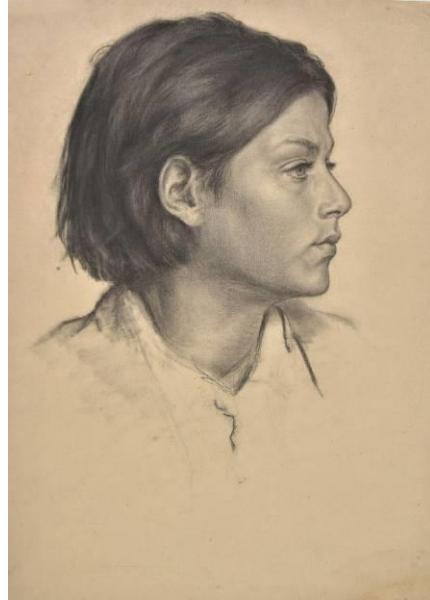
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**Evelyn De Morgan** (London 1855 – 1919)

*Head of a woman*

Charcoal on paper

Approx. 19 ¼ x 14 in. (49 x 36 cm.)



De Morgan was a successful and prolific artist, exhibiting a range of her works from the first Grovenor Gallery exhibition 1877 until her death in 1919. Her style is distinctive in its rich use of colour, allegory and the dominance of the female form. Evelyn's women contrast noticeably with the women painted by male Pre-Raphaelite artists, such as those by Edward Burne-Jones, who seem to be ephemeral, dreamlike people in danger of wilting away. Instead, De Morgan presents strong, athletic women, who are beautiful but robust – characteristics that are superbly visualised in the present drawing of a young lady in profile. The sitter's lively and immediate features are astonishingly modern for their time.

Evelyn's early works such as *Ariadne in Naxos* and *Venus and Cupid* are indebted to the Classical influence taught at the Slade School of Art by Sir Edward Poynter. Her style then develops to engage with the commercially successful style promoted by the Pre-Raphaelites and her works take on more allegorical meanings or symbolic references to life, death and the entrapment of women in a male patriarchal society, as seen in paintings such as *The Gilded Cage* and *The Prisoner*. De Morgan's works offer a fascinating insight into key Victorian concerns and ideas. Her lifelong interest in spiritualism is linked to her feminist and anti-war beliefs, and these form the inspiration for many of her works and enable us to understand them in new and revealing ways.

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