Embroidered Mourning Picture

Primary Maker
Catherine L. Schanck

Medium
Plied silk thread, watercolor, and gouache on silk with linen backing

Description
A pictorial embroidery on an off-white silk ground fabric, worked within an oval with plied silk thread in dark green, medium green, light green, pale blue, medium brown, light brown, golden tan, and off white. The stitches are varied and include surface satin, seed, chain, and stem. In addition to the embroidered areas of the piece, the central figure's hands and face are painted in watercolor and gouache over an opaque gesso applied directly onto the silk ground fabric. The scene, worked in a large oval, depicts a seated woman in a placid landscape. The female figure poses with her left elbow propped on her thigh, her cheek resting against her left hand, while her right arm hangs down, holding what might be a hat or bonnet. The woman is dressed in what appears to be a jacket and petticoat, draped at the neck, with long sleeves revealing her wrists. Her dark brown hair is dressed in ringlets and worn long and loose. She gazes directly at the viewer, while at her feet stands a small spaniel type dog. Immediately behind the woman to the left is a large willow tree, with several branches visible above. The leaves are worked in small chain stitches, interspersed with tiny seed stitches, giving an airy appearance to the leaves. A deep green vine hangs from the trunk, with what appear to be white moonflower or morning glory flowers in bloom. A small willow sapling grows in the lower left foreground. Additional willows bend and sway in the background at right. A portion of a small fence is visible at right. In the foreground, at the feet of the resting woman, is what appears to be a still pond with a few scattered waterlilies along the bottom right. The sky above the figure and scene is handpainted in blue and white watercolor directly on the silk ground.

Dimensions
Oval Sight: 14.38 × 11.5 in. (36.5 × 29.2 cm)