

JOHN MITCHELL

FINE PAINTINGS



Jean Georges Hirn

Grappe de Raisin

oil on copper
13 x 9¾ in. (33 x 25 cm.)
signed and dated 1815

Hirn worked almost exclusively on copper, and it is this support that allowed him to work in such incredible detail and attain the luminous tones, and rich contrasts you see in this painting. This still life is a classic vanitas with the objects depicted acting as an allegory of the transience of the things of the world and the inevitability of death. The two bunches of grapes contrast the fullness of life and the decay of death.

The butterfly is traditionally a symbol of the resurrection of the human soul, with its life-cycle of caterpillar, chrysalis and butterfly symbolizing life, death and the resurrection. By extension the grapes themselves may refer to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. The string that suspends the bunches is a reference to the fragility of life, literally, life hanging by a thread.