Study of a Seated Lady

John Vanderbank



REF: 3096

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Description

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John Vanderbank (1694-1739)
Study of a Lady seated on an elaborate Chair

with collector's mark on backing
Pen and grey ink and washes over pencil on laid paper
17.1 by 13.2 cm., 6 ¾ by 5 in.

Provenance:
With Colnaghi & Co. Ltd, Old Bond Street, London;
John Daniel Tilford (b.1978) (Lugt no.4498)

Vanderbank was widely regarded as the natural successor to the pre-eminent portrait painter, Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) in whose Academy he studies from 1711. He was also an accomplished draughtsman and developed a parallel career as a notable book illustrator. However, his success was effectively derailed by his love of high living.

Vanderbank's father had been a Huguenot tapestry weaver who, on his death, left a substantial legacy to his family. This relative wealth appears to have encouraged Vanderbank to adopt the lifestyle of a gentleman and to live well beyond his means. In 1724, he ran away to France to escape debtors' prison and, on his return, he had to live within the liberties of the Fleet Prison, until his brother Moses was able to discharge his debts.

Whilst at Kneller's Academy he met the French artist Louis Chéron (1660-1725), who moved to England circa 1695, after studying in Rome. In 1720, Chéron and Vanderbank broke away from Kneller to establish their own Academy at St Martin's Lane, where studying Old Master Paintings, rather than engravings was encouraged in order to understand human form and posture. Furthermore, a greater emphasis was placed on careful, detailed drawing from life rather than just producing rapid, schematic sketches that had, until then been the usual practice.

The present drawing demonstrates the extraordinary vivacity of line characteristic of Vanderbank's draughtsmanship. It does not appear to relate to any known portrait.

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