Portrait of a Boy in Van Dyck costume

Katherine Read



REF: 3163

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Description

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Katherine Read (1723-1788)
Portrait of a Boy in Van Dyck costume

Half-length
Pastel
59.7 by 44.3 cm., 23 ½ by 17 ½ in.

Provenance:
With the Sabin Galleries, London (as by Cotes);
Ernest W. Franklin, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1968

Katherine Read was a member of a prominent Jacobite family, her uncle was Sir John Wedderburn, who was executed for his part in the uprising following the battle of Culloden of 1745. Probably due to their Jacobite connections, Read was sent first to Paris in circa 1751, before travelling onto Rome, where she remained until 1753. Whilst in Italy she honed her skills as a portraitist, mainly in pastels. In May 1753, she returned to England travelling via Florence, Venice (where she met Rosalba Carriera, whose work she had long admired) and Paris. Read settled in London and rapidly established herself as one of the most accomplished and sought after pastel portraitists of the period. Members of the Royal Family, including Queen Charlotte, the Prince of Wales and Prince Frederick, as well as many of the most fashionable members of society, all sat to Read.

By the mid 1770s however, Read's popularity was fading and in 1777, she left England, intending to establish herself in Madras. Her brother William was a surgeon for the East India Company. In October 1778, her failing health led the artist to leave India and return to England, but two months into her return voyage, Read died and was buried at sea.

The present portrait demonstrates the artist's delicate and assured handling of her chosen medium and her extraordinary facility for capturing different textures of the costume of the young sitter in the seventeenth century so-called Van Dyck costume which was popular in the mid eighteenth century.

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