



PROANTIC
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Portrait Of Elizabeth Penyston C.1635; Cornelius Johnson (1593-1664), Signed And Dated



18 950 EUR

Signature : Cornelius Johnson (1593-1664)

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Length : 7

Width : 82

Height : 97

Description

Through merit and splendid achievement, the artist of this portrait can be placed within the first rank of England's portrait painters of the generation before Van Dyke. Cornelius Johnson was a painter beautifully sensitive to individual character and his careful and faithful depictions of clothing afford a priceless resource to historians - he was the first British-born portrait painter (born in London) to regularly sign and date his work. His precise, meticulous, and dignified portraits perfectly reflect the spirit of the arts in England at the time. So great a painter, he was sworn in as the King's own painter in 1632. His work is found in most public collections in Britain and in many private collections - seen on the walls in many British country houses, in the possession of descendants of the original

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sitters - and the best examples of his work, such as our portrait, are not often available on the market

This exquisite portrait is a particularly splendid example of the sumptuous half-length female portraits that Johnson painted for members of the court and gentry during the 1630s. Painted in 1635, three years after Van Dyck's arrival, Johnson makes no attempt to obey the rules of Baroque and instead sensitively depicts in complete honesty his sitter against a plain wall, and without distracting backdrops and flowing draperies. It depicts a lady in a striking black dress with voluminous white sleeves and lawn and lace collar - that great signifier of rank and wealth. The facial features, the pearl jewellery, and the soft curls of the hair have been delicately and sensitively rendered that there is a great degree of realism. The depiction of this portrait with such a forensic attention to detail would have taken many hours of precise painting. The result is sublime and is amongst his very best works. Presented in a striking gilded frame.

The portrait is signed with the artist's characteristic signature of the time and dated 'C J fecit 1635' and inscribed 'aetatis sva 35' (indicating that the sitter was 35 years of age). By tradition the sitter is Elizabeth Penyston who married John Hastings, however, the birth dates for this couple are incongruous with that of our sitter. The sitter could be Elisabeth Peniston (from Shorne, Kent, England) or Elizabeth Pennyston (from London) who were both baptised around 1600 and both resided in the locality in which the artist painted many individuals at that time.

Of interest, the year prior to the date of our portrait, the artist used the same faded purple pink and dark green ribbon and bows in his portrait of Lettice, Viscountess Falkland (1634), his Portrait of Anne, Countess of Bedford (1634), and a Portrait of a Lady (sold Christie's 26 April 1985,

Lot. 83).

A Portrait of a lady, traditionally identified as Lady Corbett (half-length, in a black dress adorned with pink rosettes and a reticella lace collar, cartwheel ruff and headdress) by the artist sold at Christie's South Kensington: April 28, 2016 [Lot 14] for £158,500. A Portrait of a young boy (+ Portrait of a young girl; pair) by the artist sold at Christie's New York: January 27, 2010 [Lot 51] for \$182,500. A Portrait of a lady by the artist sold at Christie's London: December 9, 2009 [Lot 231] sold for £133,250. A Portrait of Elizabeth Campion (1614-1673) (half-length, in a green embroidered dress with a lace collar and red and white bows, signed with initials and dated 'C. J. fecit- 1631-' (lower right) by the artist sold at Christie's London: May 2, 2013 [Lot 316] for £88,275.

Johnson was born into a Flemish/German immigrant family in 1593 in London. He is thought to have begun his independent practice in London, in about 1619. Where he trained it is not fully known as records are scant, but it is thought to be in Amsterdam. In addition, he may also have received some training in the London studio of Marcus Gheeraerts II (1561/2-1636), who was the official portraitist of James I's queen, Anne of Denmark. As a result, even Johnson's earliest pictures display a level of continental sophistication not often seen in the works of English Jacobean artists. And in a society that relished 'conspicuous consumption', and thus the display of expensive costumes, Johnson's Dutch realism and sense of likeness proved popular. He became extremely prolific and he painted elegant images of the King, the Queen, and the whole court, many leading lawyers and public servants, but also a regional clientele away from the court primarily in Kent. He was the first British-born painter to sign his paintings (and often dating them as well) as a matter of course (it must be noted how rare it was for painters in Britain up to

this time to sign their works). It is thought that Johnson brought this unusual habit back from a period of training in the Netherlands.

In 1632, the same year Van Dyck arrived in England, Johnson was appointed one of King Charles I's painters. In late 1634 Johnson is recorded to have been living in London. By some accounts, Johnson moved to Kent around 1636 but this is not known for certain. What is certain is that from about the early 1630s onwards his clients included many sitters from a group of families living around Canterbury, Kent.

In 1643, just prior to the outbreak of the Civil Wars in Britain, Johnson and his family left for Holland where he worked in more than one city and was leading portrait painter in Utrecht, where he remained until his death. His only surviving son, called Cornelius, was born in London in 1634. He too was a painter and assisted his father.

Provenance: Private UK collection

Measurements: Height 97cm, Width 82cm
framed (Height 38.25", Width 32.25" framed)