



18th Century English Portrait Of An Elegant Young Lady - Circle Of Arthur Devis (1712-1787)



9 200 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 80 cm

Height : 97 cm

Depth : 2 cm

Description

A beautiful, decorative and highly detailed 18th century English portrait of an elegant young woman, painted circa 1755. The subject of this painting wears an orange silk dress and is seated next to a table, in a wood-paneled drawing room. The artist has included so many tantalizing details in this painting and as a result, it offers an evocative window into the life of a young woman from a wealthy family, in 18th century England. Furniture designs include a Chippendale-inspired mahogany-backed chair and a sleek table. Even the paneling of the room in which the lady sits includes a landscape painting above the door, within which it is even possible to see the outline of a fisherman wading in the water of the landscape beyond. Contrasting these realistic details is the extravagant green drapery

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left flying behind her head, adding a sense of drama and inspired by traditional old master portraiture. The composition set up in an interior echoes the so-called "conversation piece" genre. This popular form of painting took much inspiration in its modest size and subject matter from 17th-century Dutch interior paintings. This particular example, which bears a not-so-modest frame, is a fine example of what became the English Conversation Piece in the 18th century. The portrait is reminiscent of the paintings of Arthur Devis (1712-1787), born in Lancashire. Devis specializes in family portraits integrated into the Conversation Piece genre. His settings for these portraits were diverse, from 18th-century parks to beautiful contemporary interiors. It is entirely possible that the creator of this work of art was familiar with the works of Devis, who often paid close attention to architectural layouts and details. This is a genre in which the young Gainsborough also excelled. Despite the very characteristic face and the finely preserved brushstrokes, it has not been possible to identify a specific artist with this work. It is clear that it is the attributes and achievements of this young woman that are being discussed here. Within painting, there are in fact two opposing worlds, the worlds of diligent domesticity and that of pleasure. The inclusion of the landscape above the door also subtly emphasizes this in the juxtaposed realities between the outside world and the safe sphere of the house in which she calmly resides. It appears that the young woman has just put away some brightly colored needlework that can be contained in a basket on the table. Needlework, and the precision and diligence required to perfect the art, was often used in 17th-century Dutch painting to suggest good Protestant morals and a strong work ethic. Unlike meticulous needlework, in her right hand she holds a sheet of music. It is true that music had become a very important achievement for young women in the 18th century. The musicality of young women was often evoked in symbolic

terms in paintings of this century. The notions of harmony and home as the foundation on which future happiness would spring are often emphasized in such images. However, music's ability to awaken the senses has sometimes become associated with life's more enjoyable and indulgent activities. One wonders if this lady was the young wife of a patron, displaying her achievements in visual and symbolic terms, or if she was actually looking for a husband. The bunch of grapes on the table, the great lubricator of love, portends pleasures to come. The name "Silvia" is carefully written at the top of the music sheet. This tantalizing detail can be read in several ways. Is that the name of our sitter, perhaps? Perhaps she just received this musical tribute from an admirer? Likewise, could it be a reference to a forgotten ballad or to a character in a play? Silvia, daughter of the Duke of Milan in Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, could be referenced here for example. Because it was this heroine who played the court game with tremendous agility, notably by writing and receiving love letters from her suitors. The identity of this elegant sitter has become obscured over time, and we wonder what life she may have led as a result. This beautiful portrait is in an excellent state of conservation and is ready to hang in an antique Lely style frame carved and later gilded. Higher resolution images on request. Worldwide delivery available. Canvas: 25" x 30" / 64cm x 76cm. Frame: 31.5" x 38" / 80cm x 97cm