



Johann Wyrsh Attr. To, Portrait Of An Unknown Lady In A Chestnut Gown



5 900 EUR

Signature : ULRIKA PASCH ATTR. À

Period : 18th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oil painting

Length : 55 cm

Height : 67 cm

Description

JOHANN MELCHIOR WYRSCH attr.
to PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN LADY IN A
CHESTNUT GOWN
JOHANN MELCHIOR
WYRSCH attr. to Buochs 1732 - 1798 Buochs Oil
on canvas, with original 18th-century frame 67 x
55 cm / 26.4 x 21.7 inches, with frame 80.5 x
66.5 cm / 31.7 x 26.2
inches
PROVENANCESweden, private
collection
ON THE DATING AND
ATTRIBUTION OF THE PORTRAIT
The year
1775 holds special significance for all enthusiasts
and connoisseurs of French history--it marks the
coronation of Louis XVI, a monarch whose reign
signified the twilight of the Ancien Régime
before the Revolution. Coincidentally, this year
also occupies an important place in the history of
fashion: it was at the Reims Cathedral, during the

Dealer

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king's anointment ceremony, that Marie Antoinette appeared before the assembled court in a magnificent ensemble. However, it was not only her gown that captured attention. The queen's hairstyle--a towering, voluminous structure of hair, ribbons, and feathers--immediately captivated Paris and set the tone for fashion across Europe. The creator of this masterpiece was Léonard Autié (1751-1820), a hairdresser who elevated hairstyling to an art form. Born in the small town of Pamiers in southern France, he moved to Paris in the early 1770s, where he quickly earned a reputation as the finest stylist at court. It was Autié whom Marie Antoinette entrusted with crafting the iconic looks that would later become hallmarks of her era. This hairstyle became known as the "pouf", and, as the eminent fashion historian Alexander Vassiliev has rightly noted, the presence of such a coiffure in a painted portrait provides a highly accurate means of dating 18th-century artworks. The same holds true for this remarkable portrait of an unknown lady in a chestnut-colored gown from our gallery's collection, whose creation Vassiliev precisely identified, dating it to the years 1775-1776. The painting came from a private collection in Sweden, which had traditionally linked it to the Swedish school of painting. However, this attribution required further examination and clarification. The artistic manner displayed features characteristic of several national schools--French? Swiss? Possibly influenced by South German masters? It was here that the invaluable expertise of Dr. Bodo Hofstetter, a distinguished specialist in 18th-century portraiture, proved instrumental. He was the one who attributed the portrait to Johann Melchior Wyrsh (1732-1798).

JOHANN MELCHIOR WYRSCH AND HIS INFLUENCE ON THE ART OF BESANÇON

The name Johann Melchior Wyrsh (1732-1798) holds a special place in the history of 18th-century portraiture. Born in Switzerland, he began his artistic career

in Lucerne, but it was France that became the stage for his professional development. From 1763 onward, Wyrsh lived and worked in Besançon, becoming, in effect, the official portraitist of the local aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and figures from the world of art. His style represents a delicate balance between the academic tradition of French portraiture and the Swiss commitment to realism, making his works deeply expressive and precise in their depiction of nature. As his biographer noted: «Pendant les vingt années qu'il a passées en France, Wyrsh peignit la plupart des familles un peu fortunées de sa province d'adoption, ou les excellents portraits de ce maître sont considérés, dans une société qui se renouvelle si vite, comme des titres d'ancienneté.» ("During the twenty years he spent in France, Wyrsh painted most of the wealthier families of his adopted province, where this master's excellent portraits are regarded, in a society that renews itself so rapidly, as titles of antiquity.") (Wey, 1906, p. X) Besançon, where Wyrsh spent the most fruitful years of his career, was experiencing a flourishing artistic scene at the time. In 1773, together with Luc-François Breton (1731-1800), he founded the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, an institution that played a crucial role in shaping the cultural life of the region. The high demand for commissions enabled the artist to refine his artistic language to perfection, making him one of the leading portraitists in France, though his work was not directly tied to Paris. Wyrsh's oeuvre laid the foundation for the development of the portrait genre in the Franche-Comté region, which, unlike the grand and idealized portraits of Paris, leaned toward restraint, meticulous attention to detail, and subtle psychological depth. In this context, our "Portrait of an Unknown Lady in a Chestnut Gown" stands as an excellent example, blending the elegance of French Rococo with the Swiss precision in rendering details.