# Study Of The Head Of A Gentleman And A Lady From The 17th Century By Michael Dahl 1659-1743



9 400 EUR

Period : 18th century
Condition : Très bon état
Material : Paper
Width : 24cm
Height : 33cm
Depth : 1cm

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| Description |
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A magnificent 18th-century portrait of a gentleman by Michael Dahl (1659-1743). Charcoal and white chalk heightened on gray paper. Born in Sweden in 1659, Michael Dahl first visited England in 1682 to assess the patronage opportunities presented by the death of Sir Peter Lely. After several years of travel in France and Italy, he finally settled in London in 1689 where he worked in the studio of Sir Godfrey Kneller and developed a portrait style influenced by his master. Dahl quickly became Kneller's chief rival and secured the patronage of Prince George of Denmark and his wife, Princess Anne. His studio clientele grew considerably, and he appears to have become the preferred London portraitist during this period. Dahl appears to have adopted from Kneller the practice of making

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## PERIOD PORTRAITS

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head studies to fix the image of a sitter for their final portrait. Both artists produced these chalk drawings on blue or gray paper. Until 1973, no drawings were formally attributed to Dahl. However, an article by J. Douglas Stewart in "Master Drawings" claimed that some sketches, previously thought to be by Kneller, were actually part of a larger group that he attributed to Dahl himself. This led to the emergence of a body of work and the attribution to Dahl of several other similar studies, including the soft-toned drawings of a man and a woman shown here. Kneller's drawings feature stronger contrasts of light and shade, often more schematic execution, and a more pronounced line, with a tendency toward long, baroque curves, to define the sitter's hair. Dahl's drawing is more restrained and careful, and the modeling in both works shown here is achieved by short hatching strokes and areas of softer, denser shading, highlighted with white chalk. The characterization as well as the setting distinguish them from the drawings of Sir Godfrey Kneller. Stewart captures the essential quality of Dahl's drawings: "It is interesting to note how similar Dahl's style is to that of his paintings, for example, the powdery tone and the modeling in short strokes." (1) It has also been noted that Dahl 'generally shaded the outlines of mouths, added strong highlights to noses, and paid attention to the structure of nostrils' (2), all of which are reflected in the present work. This study of a male head is comparable to drawings such as Dahl's study of Christopher Lethieullier (black and white chalk on blue paper, 430 x 324 mm, Courtauld Gallery, London), which was preparatory to the Uppark portrait. The portrait of a woman is more refined, but it is clear that this is also a head study by Dahl. This portrait is comparable in both style and style to Dahl's Drawing of a Gentleman (black and white chalk on blue paper, 330 x 240 mm, Lowell Libson and Jonny Yarker Ltd.), and particularly emphasizes the treatment of the eyes. This portrait, moreover, resembles many of Dahl's female models. Her

portrait, titled Sarah, Duchess of Marlbrough, is typical, with the same tilt of the head and cold, pensive gaze as Dahl's. Although such drawings played an important role in Dahl's creative output, few have survived and remain rare compared to the volume of his painted portraits. Finely executed with a delicate touch of white chalk to emphasize the essential form of the faces, these captivating sketches make worthwhile additions to Dahl's known works on paper.MICHAEL DAHL 1659-1743 Portrait of a Gentleman Charcoal and white chalk on gray paper $35 \times 25$ cm · $330 \times 240$ mm Drawn c. 1725-1735MICHAEL DAHL 1659-1743 Portrait of a Lady Charcoal and white chalk on blue paperI am grateful to David H. Solkin, FBA, Malcolm A. Rogers, CBE, and James Innes-Mulraine for their invaluable assistance in cataloguing these drawings.