



Portrait Of A Lady, Mrs Wray In A Silk Dress & Pink Wrap C.1698 Oil On Canvas Painting



10 150 EUR

Signature : Entourage de Michael Dahl (1659-1743)

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 76

Height : 88

Depth : 8

Description

Bathed in soft light and framed by a luminous oval of carved and gilded wood, this portrait captures a moment of poised anticipation: a young woman on the threshold of adult life, composed yet full of inner vitality. Her head is turned slightly toward the viewer, the corners of her mouth lifted in a subtle, knowing expression. She wears a fine white chemise and a luxurious crimson mantle, evoking the classical dignity favoured in late Stuart portraiture. Her hair is swept into an elevated coiffure. Painted around 1695-1705, and attributed to the Circle of Michael Dahl, this portrait is most plausibly a depiction of Elizabeth Byng (1680-1759), later the wife of Reverend William Wray, Rector of Broad Chalke, Wiltshire. The painting likely marks a key moment in her life--possibly her

Dealer

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coming of age, or a betrothal--during a period in England when portraiture served as a statement of social identity, familial pride, and future alliance. Elizabeth was born into a distinguished and intellectually engaged family. Her father, John Byng, was a gentleman of the City of London; her mother, Elizabeth Bateman, came from a family rooted in the capital's mercantile and professional class. But it was through her brothers--Robert Byng (1666-1720) and Edward Byng (c.1676-1753)--that Elizabeth stood at the very heart of the English artistic world. Both Robert and Edward were active in the vibrant portrait scene of late seventeenth-century London. Edward, in particular, became the chief assistant to Sir Godfrey Kneller, England's leading Baroque portraitist and Principal Painter to the Crown. Edward Byng lived in Kneller's house on Great Queen Street and, upon Kneller's death in 1723, was entrusted with all his drawings and unfinished works. Many of these he completed himself--receiving the remaining fees owed to the master--evidence of both technical skill and professional esteem. Edward's numerous sketchbooks and drawings, many now housed in the British Museum, form one of the richest surviving visual archives of the age. It is possible that this portrait of his sister was painted within that circle--conceivably even as a collaborative work between Edward and another hand from Kneller or Dahl's studio. In 1711, Elizabeth married Rev. William Wray, who served as rector of Broad Chalke in Wiltshire until his death in 1730. The couple had at least six children, including William, Robert Bateman, and Charles Wray. In his will, Edward Byng left Elizabeth a life interest in his estate; after her death, it passed to her sons. The subsequent descent of family possessions, including this portrait and Edward's sketchbooks, is partially traceable. The Byng drawings now in the British Museum appear to have passed from Robert Bateman Wray to his great-granddaughter, Margaret Wray, and from her to Cecil Wray Byng Wilkins, securing a

remarkable continuity of artistic legacy through the female line. A partially legible label on the reverse of the painting refers to "married Revd Will..." and other familial connections, though misreadings in the 19th century led to confusion over whether the sitter was Wray's wife, daughter, or granddaughter. Genealogical and stylistic evidence strongly support the identification as Elizabeth Byng herself, painted before her marriage, likely in her late teens. The portrait's attribution to the Circle of Michael Dahl (1659-1743) is supported by its oval format, the sitter's idealised features, and the delicate modelling of light across her face and drapery. Dahl, a Swedish émigré who rose to prominence in England during the 1690s, became a favourite of Queen Anne's court. His studio was known for its graceful refinement, luminous flesh tones, and the quiet dignity of its female sitters--qualities clearly reflected here. Notably, the painting survives in exceptional condition. The surface retains its original tonal range and refinement with only the most minimal intervention over time. There is no evidence of heavy retouching or overpainting--allowing the artist's hand and the sitter's character to remain remarkably intact. Few works of this period reach us with such clarity of execution and purity of surface. Set against the backdrop of England's post-Glorious Revolution stability and cultural flowering, the portrait reflects a world in which aristocratic and gentry families commissioned likenesses not only to assert social standing, but to anchor personal memory and familial continuity. Painted at a time when England was transitioning from the final Stuart monarchs into a new Hanoverian age, this work offers a window into the domestic and cultural life of the landed professional class in early 18th-century England. Preserved in a fine carved and gilded oval frame, richly adorned with stylised foliage. Both intimate and stately, the portrait offers collectors a rare convergence of artistic pedigree and enduring visual charm. Measurements: Height 88cm, Width 76cm

framed (Height 34.5", Width 30" framed)