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Portrait Of Lady Diana Bruce In A Silk Dress, Oil On Canvas Painting, Peter Lely, Circa 1660



6 450 EUR

Signature : Entourage de Sir Peter Lely (1616-1680)

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 79

Height : 88

Depth : 6

Description

Portrait of Lady Diana Bruce in a Blue Dress with Cut Sleeves c.1660-1670 Circle of Sir Peter Lely (1616-1680) Presented is a captivating oil on canvas portrait of the noble Lady Diana Bruce, an exemplary work from the highly fashionable and influential circle of Sir Peter Lely, created circa 1660-1670. This striking painting offers a rare glimpse into the opulent world of the English Restoration court and aristocracy, a period of cultural resurgence and political intrigue following the turbulent years of the English Civil War and the Interregnum. The subject of this portrait is Lady Diana Bruce, a woman of truly remarkable lineage and social standing in the seventeenth century. Born around 1648, she was the daughter of Robert Bruce, 1st Earl of Ailesbury, and Lady Diana Grey. Her aunt was

Dealer

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the ill-fated Lady Jane Grey (1537-1554), the nominal Queen of England for just nine days in 1553 during the tumultuous succession crisis following the death of King Edward VI. Lady Diana's life was marked by two marriages and a tragically early death. On January 29, 1666, she married her first husband, Sir Seymour Shirley, 5th Baronet. They lived at the Shirley family seat, Staunton Harold Hall in Leicestershire. She bore him one son, Robert Shirley, who was born posthumously after Sir Seymour's death in 1667. She married her second husband, Sir John Manners (later 1st Duke of Rutland), on November 10, 1671. The couple resided at the historic Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire (see photo), the magnificent family home of the Manners family since 1067. Their time together was short-lived; Lady Diana tragically died there in childbirth on July 15, 1672, at the approximate age of 24. She was buried in the church at Bottesford, Leicestershire, where many members of the Manners family were interred. Her brief life, though constrained by the expectations for women of her rank to secure advantageous marriages and produce heirs, left a notable mark on the history of two prominent aristocratic families. The Bruce, Shirley, and Manners Families The Bruce family has a long and distinguished history, tracing its roots back to Robert the Bruce, King of Scots. The family rose to immense prominence, and her father was created 1st Earl of Ailesbury during the Restoration. The family's history intertwined with the highest levels of British peerage. The Shirley family was an ancient and influential gentry family in Leicestershire, seated at Staunton Harold Hall from the fifteenth century. They were staunch Royalists and High Anglicans during the turbulent English Civil War and Commonwealth periods. Sir Robert Shirley, 4th Baronet (Lady Diana's first husband's relative), famously built a church on his estate in 1653, during a time when such acts of Anglican worship were suppressed by Oliver Cromwell's regime. This act of defiance

led to his imprisonment in the Tower of London, where he died. Lady Diana married Sir Seymour Shirley, 5th Baronet, in 1666, briefly linking her Bruce lineage with this notably defiant Royalist family. The Manners family, holders of the title Duke of Rutland, have been based at Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire since 1067. The castle itself, largely rebuilt over the centuries after destruction during conflicts like the Civil War, is a major symbol of aristocratic power and stability. John Manners, the man Lady Diana married as her second husband, was a Whig politician who played a role in the political landscape of the Glorious Revolution, temporarily hosting Princess Anne at Belvoir Castle during her flight from London. The family was known for its political influence and immense wealth, continuing to be prominent figures in British high society and politics for centuries. In this portrait, Lady Diana Bruce is presented in the height of Restoration fashion, a style popularised by Lely that emphasised wealth, elegance, and a studied languor. She wears a striking gown of shimmering blue silk or satin, a luxurious fabric that highlights her high social status. The vibrant blue pigment itself would have been costly. The dress features fashionable slashed sleeves and a low, décolletage neckline revealing a white chemise or undergarment beneath. Her presentation is further enhanced by exquisite jewellery. She wears a prominent pearl necklace, a classic symbol of purity, status, and wealth in the seventeenth century. Pearls also adorn her hair, which is styled in the soft ringlets favoured at court. Her posture is formal yet relaxed, characteristic of Lely's "beauties." This cultivated image was crucial for aristocratic women; it projected stability, good taste, and an appropriate level of refinement, making the painting an important historical artifact illustrating the visual language of power and gentility of the era. A full-length version of this portrait is in the National Gallery Scotland. This painting serves as a vital historical document,

reflecting life in the English countryside during a transformative era. The Restoration period (1660-1700) was a time of immense social and political change. With the monarchy restored, the austere Puritan lifestyle of the Commonwealth period gave way to a more vibrant, pleasure-seeking culture. The aristocracy largely maintained their power and influence through their vast country estates. Life in the country for a noblewoman like Lady Diana would have involved managing a large household, social visits, and fulfilling familial duties, all within a hierarchical society that was still recovering from civil war. This portrait, in its elegance and formal pose, speaks to the stability and social order the restored monarchy sought to project. As an exquisite piece from the circle of one of England's most important portraitists, this painting not only captures the likeness of a specific individual but also encapsulates the style, values, and history of the English Restoration. It is a work of art that resonates with historical significance and aesthetic mastery. Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680), a Dutch-born artist who established his career in London, was the preeminent portrait painter of his era, serving as Principal Painter to King Charles II. Known for his technical proficiency and ability to capture an "air of sensuous languor," Lely defined the aesthetic of the Restoration court. His studio was a bustling enterprise, efficiently producing numerous portraits for high-ranking individuals. Lely often focused on the sitter's face, with skilled assistants completing the rest of the work, a common practice that allowed him to manage an immense workload. The present painting, produced within this dynamic circle, showcases the rich colour, masterful rendering of textiles, and elegance characteristic of Lely's style, a visual echo of the full-length version held in the collection of the National Galleries Scotland. Provenance The painting is documented to have been sold at Christie's, London, on May 17, 1935, listed as Lot 136, as: "Sir P. Lely, Portrait of a Lady, blue

dress with pearl ornaments - in a painted oval".

This established provenance adds another layer to its rich story, connecting it to a long tradition of art appreciation and

collection. Measurements: Height 88cm, Width 79cm framed (Height 34.5", Width 31" framed)