



John Greenhill (c. 1644-1676) - Half-length Portrait Of A Knight In Armor With A Scarf



17 600 EUR

Period : 17th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 74cm

Height : 86cm

Depth : 2cm

Description

Portrait of a cavalier half-length, facing right, clad in dark, highly reflective steel plate armour, a red sash and full bottomed wig. Greenhill uses his signature high-contrast lighting to make the armour gleam and to give the sitters face, a highly three dimensional, theatrical presence. The light bouncing off the metal is softened by the sitters dark brown full-bottomed wig, and a vibrant silver fringed red sash which winds through the portrait providing a rich, theatrical burst of colour. It is perhaps worth noting that during the 17th century, standardised military uniforms in the modern sense did not exist. Naval and military leaders as well as member of the aristocracy were all often depicted in polished plate armour combined with high-status court fashion (such as massive wigs and lace cravats) to

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denote their rank and authority. During the Restoration of King Charles II (starting in 1660), portraits like those painted by John Greenhill were far more than simple family keepsakes. They were crucial instruments of political propaganda, social climbing, and cultural rebuilding. So commissioning a portrait such as the one we see here, enabled a gentleman to publicly declare his allegiance to the newly restored King and legitimise the new regime. The dramatic lighting, rich textures of silk and lace, and flowing wigs depicted in portraits of this period were of course, an intentional and defiant rejection of the plain, somber "Roundhead" aesthetic of the Commonwealth era. In this period in history to look luxurious was to look loyal! The Restoration era also saw the rise of a new class of professional administrative leaders--men of talent rather than just inherited land (such as Samuel Pepys or Anthony Deane). So portraits also allowed these self-made men to visually align themselves with the traditional aristocracy. By being painted with the same Baroque grandiosity, armour, and dramatic draping as dukes and princes, they could also cement their high status in the new social hierarchy. John Greenhill (c. 1644-1676) was one of the most talented English painters of the Restoration Baroque era. As the star pupil of Sir Peter Lely (court painter to Charles II), Greenhill inherited a dramatic, fluid style influenced by Anthony van Dyck. A portrait painter and draughtsman his first work is thought to be a portrait of his uncle, James Abbot of Salisbury. Born in Somerset, by 1662 he had moved to London. He joined the studio of Peter Lely, but soon established his own studio. Greenhill painted a wide variety of people, many of them actors and playwrights. His early works consisted chiefly of theatrical drawings of actors as characters, executed in crayons and pastel. Greenhill's promising career was brought to an abrupt end at age 31 due to a dissolute lifestyle which saw him tragically drowned in a gutter after a drinking

spree. Happily he left behind exceptional portraits such as this. This painting is housed in a later antique 'lily' style frame. I am grateful for comments on this portrait made by Dr Andrew Cormack, FSA, FRHistS, editor of the Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research. Higher resolution images on request. Worldwide shipping available. Canvas: 70cm x 65cm.

Framed:

86cm x 74cm.