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# 18th-c Dutch Old Master Painting By Gerard Wigmana (workum, 1673-1741)  Bathsheba At Her Bath



7 500 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Oil painting on wood

## Description

Gerard Wigmana (Workum 1673 - 1741 Amsterdam)

Bathsheba at her Bath

Oil on panel, 54.3 x 40.2 cm (21.4 x 15.8 inch); presented in a modern giltwood frame of 18th-century model

Signed 'Wigmana' (lower right)

Provenance
~ Jonas Jonasz Witsen (Amsterdam 1733 - 1788); his sale, Amsterdam, 16 August 1790, lot 86, sold for 31 florins to 'Yver'
~ Private collection, France

## Dealer

Red Rose Fine Art
Old Master paintings, drawings and prints, objets d'art and porcelain
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Gerard Wigmana was born in Workum in Friesland as the son of the merchant Jan Tiaerdts and his wife Gaitske Gatzes Wigmana - interestingly, he took the last name of his mother's family.1 Wigmana developed a passion for painting at an early age, and took drawing lessons with a local glass painter and studied with the German painter Joachim Burmeister, before becoming a student of Jelle Sybrandi, a member of the Dutch painters' society. He then undertook a Grand Tour to the South from 1698 to 1702, visiting Paris, where he studied at the Académie Royale for a year and a half at the outset of the journey, after which he continued to Rome, where he arrived on 14 November 1699 and entered the studio of the painter Giovanni Maria Morandi, himself a pupil of Pietro da Cortona. He also met the artist Daniel Seiter in the Eternal City, and supplied details of the latter's life to the biographer Arnold van Houbraken. In Rome he copied three paintings by Raphael, and he is also known to have copied a painting by Titian in Modena.

By 1702 Wigmana had returned North and lived in Dokkum and Leeuwarden, where he married in 1707; he settled as an independent master and the esteem for his talent is indicated by his position as art teacher to Princess Henriette Amalia's children Johan Willem Friso and his seven sisters, which he held for seven years. The artist then moved to Amsterdam. He furthermore undertook a brief journey to London in 1737. Wigmana's sojourn in France and Italy, where he studied the works of the great masters of the Renaissance, proved highly influential to his work. According to biographer Johan van Gool, the artist made so many copies of Raphael that he came to be known as the 'Frisian Raphael'.2

The paintings that Wigmana produced after his return from the South can be characterised a typical works of the Classicist 'fijnschilder' or fine-painter school, who excelled in the refined

and minutely detailed depiction of fabrics and textures. He was quite celebrated during the eighteenth century, but was mostly forgotten during the next, and it was not until a publication by Theodor von Frimmmel in 1907 that his name entered the annals of art history.3 Due to this relative obscurity, many of his paintings were attributed to other artists of the period, notably Willem van Mieris and Adriaen van der Werff, and the process of identification of works by Wigmana continues to this day. To date, several dozens of paintings by him are known, mostly depicting mythological, religious and allegorical scenes, but also a number of portraits.

The present recently discovered work, which is in beautiful state of preservation, is a typical example of his elegant style, and is also signed by the artist. The attractive subject of the beautiful Bathsheba is taken from the Old Testament (2 Samuel 11): one night in Jerusalem, King David was taking the air on his rooftop, when he spotted a beautiful woman bathing nearby. When he made enquiries as to her identity, he found out that she was Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's warriors. The King summoned Bathsheba to his palace, they slept together and Bathsheba became pregnant, which led to several dramatic events. The subject was favoured by painters of the period as it was among very few biblical stories which provided opportunities for depicting the female nude in all its graciousness.

Our work is the only known instance of Wigmana treating this subject. It can however be compared to his Susanna and the Elders in the Bildergalerie in Schloss Sanssouci, Potsdam, dated 1731.4

1. For the artist, see: B. van Haersma Buma, 'Gerardus Wigmana. De Friese Raphaël', De Vrije Fries 49 (1969), pp. 43-65, J. van der Meer Mohr, 'An attribution to Gerard Wigmana', Mercury no. 4 (1986), pp. 48-52 and B. van Haersma Buma, 'Weerzien met Wigmana', in: It doe yn 't hjoed

wer woun. Liber amicorum Sytse ten Hoeve, Sneek 2001, pp. 43-47.
2. Johan van Gool, De Nieuwe Schouburg der Nederlantsche kunstschilders en schilderessen, The Hague 1750, p. 386.
3. Th. von Frimmel, 'Ein signiertes Werk von Gerard Wigmana', Blätter für Gemäldekunde 3/7 (1907), pp. 109-113.
4. Oil on canvas, 74 x 56 cm, inv. no. 5551; Eckardt Götz, Die Gemälde in der Bildergalerie von Sanssouci, Potsdam 1980, cat. no. 5551.