# William Herbert, 3rd Earl Of Pembroke - 16th-century English School



90 000 EUR

Signature : École anglaise du XVIe siècle

Period : 16th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting on wood

Width : 60.6cm

Height : 74.3cm

## Description

Provenance1762, collection of Francis Greville, 1st Earl of Warwick, Warwick CastleThe Trustees of the Lord Brooks' Settlement, (removed from Warwick Castle)Sotheby's, London, 22nd March 1968, lot 81.Painted onto wooden panel, this portrait shows a dark haired gentleman in profile sporting an open white shirt. On top of this garments is a richly detailed black cloak, decorated with gold thread and lined with a sumptuous crimson lining. With the red silk inside it's all very expensive and would fall under sumptuary laws - so this is a nobleman of high degree.It's melancholic air conforms to the contemporary popularity of this very human condition, evident in fashionable poetry and music of the period. In comparison to our own modern prejudices, melancholy was associated

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with creativity in this period.This portrait appeared in the earliest described list of pictures of Warwick castle dating to 1762. Compiled by collector and antiquary Sir William Musgrave 'taken from the information of Lord & Lady Warwick' (Add. MSS, 5726 fol. 3) is described;'8. Earl of Essex - an original by Zuccharo - seen in profile with black hair. Holding a black robe across his breast with his right hand.'As tempting as it is to imagine that this is a portrait of Robert Devereux, the 2nd Earl Essex, we might take this with a pinch of salt. Its identification with this romantic and fatal Elizabethan might well have been an attempt to add romance to Warwick Castle's walls. It doesn't correspond all that well with Essex's portraits around 1600 after his return from Cadiz. Notably, this picture was presumably hung not too far away from the castle's two portraits of Queen Elizabeth I. The first, and undoubtedly the best, being the exquisite coronation portrait that was sold by Lord Brooke in the late 1970s and now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. The second, described as being 'a copy from the original at Ld Hydes', has yet to resurface.The portrait eventually ended up being hung in the State Bedroom of Warwick Castle.Archival documents present one other interesting candidate. The Greville family's earliest inventory of paintings, made in 1630 at their home Brooke House in Holborn, London, describes five portraits of identified figures. All five belonged to the courtier, politician and poet Sir Fulke Greville (1554-1628), 1st Baron Brooke, and were hung in the 'Gallerie' of Brooke House behind yellow curtains. One of them was described as being of 'Lord of Pembrooke', which is likely to have been William Herbert (1580-1630), 3rd Earl of Pembroke. William was the eldest son of Greville's best friend's sister Mary Sidney, and was brought up in the particularly literary and poetically orientated household which his mother had supported. Notably, the 3rd Earl was one of the figures that Shakespeare's first folio was dedicated to in

1623.The melancholic air to the portrait corresponds to William's own pretensions as a learned and poetic figure. The richness of the robe in the painting, sporting golden thread and a spotted black fabric, is indicative of wealth beyond that of a simple poet or actor. The portrait's dating to around the year 1600 might have coincided with William's father death and his own rise to the Pembroke Earldom. This period of his life too was imbued with personal sadness, as an illicit affair with a Mary Fitton had resulted in a pregnancy and eventual banishment by Elizabeth I to Wilton after a short spell in Fleet Prison. His illegitimate son died shortly after being born. Despite being a close follower of the Earl of Essex, William had side-stepped supporting Devereux in the fatal uprising against the Queen and eventually regained favour at the court of the next monarch James I.His linen shirt is edged with a delicate border of lace and his black cloak is lined on the inside with sumptuous scarlet and richly decorated on the outside with gold braid and a pattern of embroidered black spots.Despite the richness of his clothes, William Herbert has been presented in a dishevelled state of semi-undress, his shirt unlaced far down his chest with the ties lying limply over his hand, indicating that he is in a state of distracted detachment. It has been suggested that the fashion for melancholy was rooted in an increase in self-consciousness and introspective reflection during the late 16th and early 17th centuries.In contemporary literature melancholy was said to be caused by a plenitude of the melancholy humor, one of the four vital humors, which were thought to regulate the functions of the body. An abundance of the melancholia humor was associated with a heightened creativity and intellectual ability and hence melancholy was linked to the notion of genius, as reflected in the work of the Oxford scholar Robert Burton, who in his work 'The Anatomy of Melancholy', described the Malcontent as 'of all others [the]... most witty, [who] causeth many times divine

ravishment, and a kind of enthusiasms... which stirreth them up to be excellent Philosophers, Poets and Prophets.' (R. Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, London, 1621 in R. Strong, 'Elizabethan Malady: Melancholy in Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraits', Apollo, LXXIX, 1964).Melancholy was viewed as a highly fashionable affliction under Elizabeth I, and her successor James I, and a dejected demeanour was adopted by wealthy young men, often presenting themselves as scholars or despondent lovers, as reflected in the portraiture and literature from this period. Although the sitter in this portrait is, as yet, unidentified, it seems probable that he was a nobleman with literary or artistic ambitions, following in the same vein as such famous figures as the aristocratic poet and dramatist, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604).The work can also be compared with the portrait of the poet John Donne (c.1595), a rare example of a portrait of a known literary figure from the period, which currently hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. As discussed by Tanya Cooper, this portrait and Donne's are of a very similar format, both depicting their young sitters in a similar state of melancholic distraction, with their black cloaks wrapped around their shoulders. The similarities between this portrait and that of Donne perhaps indicate the existence of a small sub-genre of portraits depicting aspiring literary figures (see Cooper's discussion of the work in Cooper, T. Citizen Portrait: Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales, London, (2012), p.190).Both paintings contain an unusual wispy vertical white/grey brushstroke, emanating from the sitters' chests. Elizabethan portraits often contain secret signs and symbols, which told stories about their sitters, and it has been suggested that this mark could represent the vapour of melancholy (see Cooper's discussion of this feature of Donne's portrait in Cooper, T. and Eade, J. Elizabeth I & Her People, London, (2014), p.181).LiteratureCooper, T. Citizen Portrait: Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of

Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales,London, (2012).Cooper, T. and Eade, J. (ed.) Elizabeth I & Her People, London, (2014).Reynolds, A. In Fine Style: The Art of Tudor and Stuart Fashion, London, (2013).Strong, R. 'Elizabethan Malady: Melancholy in Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraits', Apollo, LXXIX,(1964).(We are grateful to Adam Busiakiewicz for his assistance researching this work)