A Nymph dancing with a tambourine

George Romney

Sold

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REF: 2841

Description

George Romney (1734-1802)
A Nymph dancing with a tambourine

Pencil and brown wash
54 by 24 cm., 21 ¼ by 9 ½ in.

Provenance:
Spink-Leger Pictures 1998;
Private Collection, USA

Exhibited:
London, Spink-Leger Pictures, Master Drawings, 17th to 20th Century, 1998, no. 19;
Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery; London, National Portrait Gallery; San Marino, California, The Huntingdon Library, George Romney 1734-1802, 2002, cat. no 56.

Literature:
Spink-Leger Pictures, Master Drawings 17th to 20th Century, London, 1998, no. 19, ill.;
Alex Kidson, George Romney 1734-1802, 2002, p. 114, ill.

The present large-scale drawing is related to perhaps Romney's most celebrated oil 'The Leverson-Gower Children,' now in the Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, painted when the artist was at the height of his powers. The portrait group showing the five youngest children of Granville 2nd Earl Gower (1721-1803), one of the most influential figures in Georgian Society, dancing in a circle with the eldest of the five, Lady Anne (1761-1832) playing the tambourine. The painting was commissioned in late November 1776 and delivered in 1777. Romney had recently returned from an extended visit to Italy, where he was inspired not only by the paintings he saw but also by classical sculpture.
The vivacity of this drawing and the freedom of handling is evident not only in the swirling mix of thick and thin brushstrokes, as he captures the movement of the figure, her arms swept above and around her head and also with her drapery, but also in the dash of ink splashed on the upper right of the sheet. Whilst unlikely to be intentional, this splash adds to the bold sense of movement and emphasises the rapidity of execution. The size of the sheet makes one wonder if it were a preliminary study, or whether it was conceived as a related, but independent work in its own right. Furthermore, the animation of the dancing form is very different from the more restrained, columnar form of Lady Anne in the other studies and in the finished oil. It is thought that the idea for the composition of the painting may have been inspired by the dancers that Romney saw in Nice celebrating May Day, en route to Italy: 'Hand in hand…they were perfectly in time with another moved with the greatest vivacity and spirit: the air of antiquity had the most enchanting effect'. (Quoted in Abbott Hall Art Gallery description of the painting see www.lakelandarts.org.uk).

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