Studies for `Viscountess Bulkeley as Hebe'

George Romney



REF: 2416

Description

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George Romney (1734-1802)
Studies for `Viscountess Bulkeley as Hebe'

Brown washes over pencil on laid paper
31.8 by 28.8 cm., 12 1/2 by 11 ¼ in.

Provenance:
R.C. Harford;
Anonymous sale Christie's, 6th June 1972, lot 90;
With Thos. Agnew & Sons (no.28749);
Private collection, UK

Elizabeth Harriet Warren (1759-1826), later Viscountess Bulkeley, was the daughter of Sir George Warren of Poynton, Cheshire and Romney painted a group portrait of the family in 1769. Sir George Warren commissioned a further full-length portrait of Elizabeth, presumably to mark her forthcoming wedding, to Thomas, 7th Viscount Bulkeley of Beaumaris (1752-1822) in April 1777. She sat to Romney on five occasions during May 1776, with a final sitting in December (Romney had fallen ill in the intervening period). The finished painting is now in the collection of the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.
Romney chose to depict the sitter as Hebe, cupbearer to the gods and goddess of youthful beauty, a popular allegorical identity for young women of the period. However, the freedom of handling, the dramatic pose and sublime surroundings depict the subject in a very different manner and mark a watershed in Romney's stylistic development, following his return from three years in Italy and demonstrate the influence of artists such as Henry Fuseli, whom he met there.

There are several preparatory sketches including a related study, showing a single figure in a similar pose to the present drawing, in the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, and another in the Morgan Library, New York.

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