A Gentleman at Bath

English School

Sold

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REF: 2825

Description

English School, 1727-8
Portrait of a Gentleman

Inscribed verso: Drawn at Bath 1727/8
Black and white chalks and stump on blue laid paper
32.5 by 28 cm., 12 ¾ by 11 in.

Provenance:
Iolo A. Williams (1890-1962), Kew Gardens, Surrey;
Thence by descent

By the time the present, unidentified, sitter sat for his portrait in the late 1720s, Bath was undergoing rapid development and transformation, from the small, largely medieval walled city, with just 3,000 residents, into the booming city, central to Georgian society life, with a population of about 35,000 at the end of the century.

Queen Anne, when still Princess, began taking the waters in Bath from 1688, which encouraged visitors to begin to flock to the city to bathe in and drink the waters. The first Pump Room and Lower Assembly Rooms were built 1704-6 and 1709 respectively. In 1705, 'Beau' Nash (1674-1762) was appointed Master of Ceremonies, tasked with overseeing the entertainment and behaviour of Bath's residents. He was instrumental in helping to cement Bath's reputation, not only as a medicinal spa, but as a popular resort for the wealthy to congregate. From the 1720s, John Wood the elder (1704-1764) and later his son, also John (1728-1781), began to build many of the city's most celebrated locations, from Queen's Square between 1728 and 1735, to the Circus (1754-c.66), the Royal Crescent (1767-c.75) and new Assembly Rooms (1769-71).

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