

# Attr. To George Knapton, Portrait of a Young Girl.

After 400 years of development, portraiture in the early 18th-century came to represent the full development of an oil painting tradition beginning in the early Renaissance in Italy and Flanders which eventually came to prominence across the entire European continent. Featuring the photorealistic depictions of historic figures in fine dress and surrounded by icons of wealth, class, and prestige these images which would soon be eclipsed by modernity are still highly valued for their dedication to fine craft. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer a fine example of these works a **Portrait of a Young Girl, attributed to George Knapton** (\$15/25,000) in our January Gallery Auction on Friday, January 19th.



The painting orbits around a young girl who stands in the center of the frame, staring back toward the viewer, not smiling, but coolly returns the viewer's gaze. She wears a long beige dress with a brilliant finish, and a small ornament of red, white, and blue flowers is affixed to her hair. The young girl has thrown a blue shawl made of the same shimmering material over her shoulder,

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where it is suspended in mid-air, encircling her. In her upturned hand, we see a perched green bird with bright red plumage. Her other hand crosses her waist and points to towards the painting's lower right corner, where a small dog rears back, with its eyes focused on the bird above it. The scene is set at the edge of a forest, with a small river and meadow visible to the right, while the left of the image remains enclosed in the obscurity of the woods.

This work follows the tradition of British and European portraiture that had become popular in the 17th and early 18th centuries, namely the photo-realistic depictions of wealth and class executed through the use of common iconographic forms. The bird resting on her hand is a traditional sign of nobility and femininity, while the dog has traditionally represented love and loyalty, but was also a notable status

symbol at the time. This combination of realistic depictions and iconic forms contrasts with later movements, especially the British School that came to prominence in the late 18th century, which emphasized genre painting, moral subjects, and small-group portraiture.

This work represents a developmental period in the work of George Knapton, who came to be best known for his work with the Society of Dilettanti beginning in the 1740s. In contrast to his more mature works, this portrait is of a singular, young subject and is depicted in a traditional style which eschews later innovations in favor of aristocratic forms. It also belies his longtime collaboration with the drapery specialist painter Joseph Van Aken, whose contribution is evident in the excellently rendered folds of the young girl's dress and shawl.

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George Knapton was born in Christchurch, a small town on the southwestern coast of England near Southampton, in 1698. The son of a local Earl, he studied art at the Royal Academy's precursor in London and spent some time in Italy as part of his Grand Tour, where he furthered his studies of the Old Masters. Knapton became an early member of the Society of Dilettanti, eventually becoming the group's portrait painter, a period of time where he completed his most important works. His portrait works in pastel were later reproduced in Thomas Birch's *Illustrious Persons of Great Britain*, lending him further acclaim. By the 1760s Knapton had given up painting and took up a position as the Surveyor of the King's Pictures, making him responsible for the Crown's art archive, before passing away in West London in 1778.

**Attr. to George Knapton,  
Portrait of Young Girl (\$15/25,000)**  
will be offered at Michaan's Auctions January Gallery Auction on Friday, January 19th, which features numerous cars in excellent condition in addition to fine examples from the Fine Art and Asian Art departments. The auction is led by a 2023 Tesla Model X in Plaid Trim with only 3,901 miles, a 1966 Ford Mustang Hardtop Coupe, as well as a 1955 Ford Thunderbird. Also included is a Large Gilt Bronze Figure of an Immortal, a notable oil painting by Joseph Henry Sharp, and a 14k yellow gold charm bracelet.

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