

Peter Lely, France Duchess of Lennox and Richmond, oil.

The pre-modern European portrait tradition is exemplified by its royal painters, who lived and worked amongst the highest strata of aristocratic society. Well paid by the standards of the time, and with the ability to commit themselves fully to the work, these artists created some of the most technically skilled paintings ever made. Michaan's Auctions is proud to



offer a work by one such painter, **Peter Lely, France Duchess of Lennox and Richmond, oil** (\$6/8,000) in our February Gallery Auction, held on Friday, February 16th.

The painting centers around the portrait of a young woman in the center of the frame, wearing a golden dress with white accents. She stands tall, facing the right side of the canvas, with her head turned and eyes turned directly towards the viewer. Her shoulder closest to the viewer is pulled back to reveal a large pearl necklace, while the left hand grips an archery bow held at her waist. Her right hand is dug into her gown, which twists upwards and around her fingers, revealing the painter's skill in

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rendering complex drapery. Behind her lies a dark forest, which fades towards an open sky full of clouds on the right side of the canvas. The dusk lighting hides many of the details of the forest, but some buildings can just be made out in the far distance.

This painting is firmly within the tradition of British and European portraiture that became popular in the 17th century. Like other works in this genre, this portrait by Peter Lely aims to display the wealth and class of the subject through the use of dress and iconography. This is accomplished both through the fine dress and pearls and through the inclusion of the archery bow. While the dress is a simple indicator of wealth, pearls were often included as a sign of royalty and chastity, frequently with religious overtones. The bow was also associated with religion, being a symbol of divine or

heroic strength since antiquity, and with the nobility itself, who had the leisure time necessary to perfect their skills in the discipline.

This painting is typical of Lely's body of work, which almost exclusively consists of portraiture, and especially women subjects. This work is evidently one of his finer examples, which are known to be of varied quality. As was common practice at the time, Lely often employed artisans to complete the body of a work, while he focused on the face of his subject. Unfortunately, his sudden death led to the rushed production of several subpar works and a flooding of the artist's market. On the whole, Lely was a skilled and respected portrait artist in his time and was commissioned to make numerous portraits of the aristocracy and royal families of England. With such fine examples as **Peter Lely, France Duchess of**

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Lennox and Richmond, oil

(\$6/8,000), it is evident why his services were in constant demand.

Peter Lely was born to Dutch parents in the state of Westphalia, located in modern-day Germany, in 1618. After studying painting in Haarlem, Lely moved to London when he was 25 years old, where he remained for the rest of his life. His early works in Britain were well received and he quickly became the favored portraitist of the English elite. He became Charles I's portraitist following 1647, and then to Oliver Cromwell following the English Civil War. Lely then returned to the royal family following their restoration in 1660 and painted for Charles II until Lely's death in 1680.

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(\$6/8,000) will be offered at Michaan's Auctions February Gallery Auction on Friday, February 16th, which features fine diamonds in excellent condition in addition to notable examples from the Fine Art and Asian Art departments. The auction is led by the jewelry department, which will be offering an unmounted pear-cut 2.45 carats colorless diamond and an unmounted pear-cut 2.96 carats colorless diamond. Also included in the sale is a lithograph by Grant Wood, an Arnaldo Pomodoro hanging sculpture, and a jade insert table screen.

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