

Galerie Canesso

Tableaux anciens

WALLERANT VAILLANT

(1623 - 1677)

Self-Portrait with a Turban

Oil on canvas, 29 1/8 x 11 7/16 in (74 x 59.5 cm)



PROVENANCE

Cambridge, Mrs Campbell; London, Christie's, 18 July 1910, lot 123 (as "Unknown", sold for 80 guineas to Clark); London, Christie's, 7 August 1942, lot 102 (as "J. E. Liotard – A Moroccan soldier", offered for sale by Knoedler, unsold); London, Christie's, 14 December 1990, lot 121 (as Wallerant Vaillant); London, with Colnaghi, The Grosvenor House Antiques Fair, 12-22 June 1991, purchased by its last owner.

Literature: - H.W. Grohn, "Ein neuerworbenes Bildnis der Niedersächsischer Landesgalerie Hannover und die Selbstporträts des Wallerant Vaillant", *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte*, 19, 1980, pp. 141-142, 144, plate 5; - Nadine Rogeaux, *Wallerant Vaillant (1623-1677). Graveur à la manière noire, dessinateur à la pierre noire et peintre de portraits*, 4 vols., unpublished doctoral thesis in the History of Art, supervised by Alain Mérot, Paris IV-Sorbonne, 1999, I, p. 436, no. P13; IV, illus. P13.

Comparative work: Another painted version of this portrait is in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (inv. 827;

oil on canvas, 72 × 58 cm).

This dutch painter and printmaker Wallerant Vaillant (born in Lille, which only became part of France in 1668) is best known for his engravings, especially his numerous mezzotints, a technique he did much to develop (1). His painted oeuvre is rarer, largely consisting of portraits, and including a number of self-portraits in which the artist presents himself clothed in a variety of picturesque costumes – for example, as a soldier (Hanover, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum), distinguished gentleman (Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister), or in Orientalist mode, as seen here (2). It is significant that the painter never represents himself exercising his art – that is, with palette and paintbrushes. In this respect, he was clearly inspired by the numerous self-portraits of Rembrandt (1606-1669) in which the great Dutchman created sartorially-varied likenesses, accentuating expression and social status more than his own entirely true profession. These have the appearance of exercises, almost a series of repertory characters, within the greatly prized genre of portraiture. In Amsterdam, Vaillant would have had ample opportunity to witness Rembrandt's genius, since he was obliged for religious motives to seek exile early in his career in the capital of the Dutch kingdom, where he lived –with the exception of some extended trips abroad – until his death. Creating this portrait through an oculus that offsets the bust enables the painter to play with optical space, an expedient he used on other occasions, for example in his portraits of *Pieter de Graeff* and *Jacoba Bicker* in the Amsterdam Museum. In this case, the highly refined, painstaking technique used in describing the face, treating transparency in an exceptionally realistic manner, heightens the photographic appearance of the work. Conversely, the reflections on the rich brocade of the turban, no doubt a product of the *Compagnie des Indes*, are depicted with a free, more generously loaded brush. It is striking how a master known for his *manière noire* was such a talented colourist. Our picture entered the critical discourse in 1980 (it was still believed to be by Liotard in 1942), never being cited in early articles regarding the other version of the subject (Berlin, Gemäldegalerie), dated to the beginning of the artist's career, in the years 1650-1655. His painted oeuvre consists not only of portraits but workshop scenes, still lifes and *trompe l'oeil* pictures. In Antwerp, Wallerant Vaillant was taught by Erasmus Quellinus (1607-1678), a pupil of Rubens (1577-1640) and his successor as city painter. Vaillant's exile in Amsterdam was the first of a series of journeys that took him abroad, especially to Germany between 1655 and 1658: he is first recorded in Middelburg, then with his brother Bernard in Frankfurt, and in Heidelberg. When the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I was crowned in Frankfurt in 1658, Vaillant was commissioned to make black chalk portraits of the new sovereign, of the Electors of Bavaria, Cologne, Brandenburg and Mainz, among others, and of Philippe d'Orléans and the Maréchal de Gramont, sent as delegates by Mazarin. In 1659, the artist came to France in the wake of Gramont, who introduced him to the Court of Louis XIV. During the preparation for the festivities for the marriage of the King and Maria Theresa, Vaillant received an important commission from the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria: five pastel portraits of Louis XIV, Maria Theresa of Austria, Anne of Austria, Marianna of Austria and Eleonora Gonzaga; these have recently enriched the collection of the Château de Versailles. In 1665, the artist was back in Amsterdam, which in this period was one of Europe's most important financial and cultural centres. Several of Vaillant's brothers were painters and portraitists: Jacques (c. 1625-1691), Jean (1627- after 1668), Bernard (1632-1698) and André (1655-1693). Notes: 1. Friedrich Wilhelm Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts – ca 1450-1700*, ed. by Ger Luijten, Amsterdam, 1987, vol. XXXI, pp. 59-213; Nadine Rogeaux, "Wallerant Vaillant (1623- 1677): premier spécialiste de la gravure en manière noire", *Nouvelles de l'Estampe*, July-September 2001, pp. 19-31; Nadine Rogeaux, "Wallerant Vaillant (1623-1677): portraitiste à la pierre noire et au pastel", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, December 2001, pp. 251-265. 2. Maurice Vandalle, "Les Frères Vaillant, artistes lillois du XVIIe siècle", *Revue belge d'histoire et*

d'archéologie, VII, 1937, pp. 341-360; Nadine Rogeaux, "Wallerant Vaillant (1623-1677), portraitiste hollandais", *Revue du Nord*, 2002/1, no. 344, pp. 25-49.