

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

North Italian School, c. 1825

Portrait of an artist in a cap

Oil on paper, affixed to canvas
28.5 x 21.2 cm. (11 x 8 ½ in.)

Provenance:

Private Collection, Italy, until 2024.



This striking portrait was painted in northern Italy, almost certainly in Milan, around 1825. It depicts an artist wearing the distinctive type of cap made fashionable by Francesco Hayez and his friends around this time. The painting, with its extraordinary immediacy, is comparable to Hayez' famous self-portrait of 1822 (fig. 1) and it is surely both by, and of, an artist within his circle.



Fig. 1, Francesco Hayez, *Self-portrait*, c. 1822, 39.5 x 35.5 cm, oil on panel, Private Collection



Fig. 2, Francesco Hayez, *Self-portrait with a group of friends*, 1827, 29.5 x 32.5 cm, oil on canvas, Museo Poldi Pezzoli

During the mid 1820s Hayez painted an unfinished self-portrait amongst a group of friends (fig. 2). Hayez is at centre. To his right are Giovanni Migliari, in profile, and Pelagio Palagi, whilst to his left are Giuseppe Molteni, in a top hat, and the writer Tomasso Grossi. Although the present work does not appear to depict either Migliari, Palagi or Molteni - all successful painters - it may well be by the latter, who, alongside Hayez, was the leading Milanese portraitist of the period.

The painting exhibits a level of refinement and sensitivity that is consistent with Molteni's portraiture (fig. 3). Additionally, there are other known examples of oil portraits on paper within Molteni's oeuvre, further strengthening the idea of his authorship. Whatever the case, the portrait aligns perfectly with the desire of this Romantic generation of artists to celebrate their artistic friendships.



Fig. 3, Giuseppe Molteni, *Portrait of Francesco Hayez*, c. 1825, 58 x 46.5 cm, oil on canvas, Private Collection