

# COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Louis-Eugène Lambert  
(Paris 1825 – 1900)

*Portrait of a man in a wide-brimmed hat*

Black and white chalk on paper  
57 x 43 cm. (22 ½ x 17 in.)

Provenance:  
Private Collection, France.



Despite being known during his lifetime as the ‘Raphael of cats’, Louis-Eugène Lambert was also an accomplished portraitist, as the present work demonstrates.<sup>1</sup> To judge by the sitter’s wide-brimmed hat, large collar and necktie, the work dates to around 1880, and therefore cannot be a self-portrait.

Lambert was born in Paris in 1825. He was a pupil of Eugène Delacroix and Paul Delaroche. From a young age, Lambert copied the old masters at the Louvre, where he was influenced by the Flemish School.

A close friend of Maurice Sand, who he had first met in the studio of Delacroix, and his wife George Sand, Lambert moved to Nohant to stay with the couple in 1844. Initially expecting to only stay for one month, Lambert ended up staying with them for twelve years, essentially becoming part of the family! Whilst in Nohant, Lambert became an essential part of the Sand’s theatrical group, often playing comic roles and creating stage designs. His correspondence with the family reveal Lambert to be a humorous and witty. By 1854, Lambert had moved back to Paris, living on the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs alongside other artists including Auguste Toulmouche, and in 1862 he married Victorine Gaitet.

Lambert debuted at the Salon in 1847 with a still life of birds, though his greatest success came a decade later in 1857 with *Cat and Parakeet*. This painting decided his career; thereafter he garnered a world-wide reputation as a painter of cats (fig. 1), gaining substantial commercial success from these pictures. He received medals in 1865, 1870 and was presented with the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 1874. In 1874, he painted Baron de Rothschild surrounded by his dogs. He died in Paris in 1900.



Fig. 1, Louis-Eugène Lambert, *Invasion*, oil on canvas, 60 x 74 cm, Museo Nacional de Belles Artes, Argentina

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<sup>1</sup> Though unsigned, the authorship is confirmed by the inscription on the work’s previous, original mount.