

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

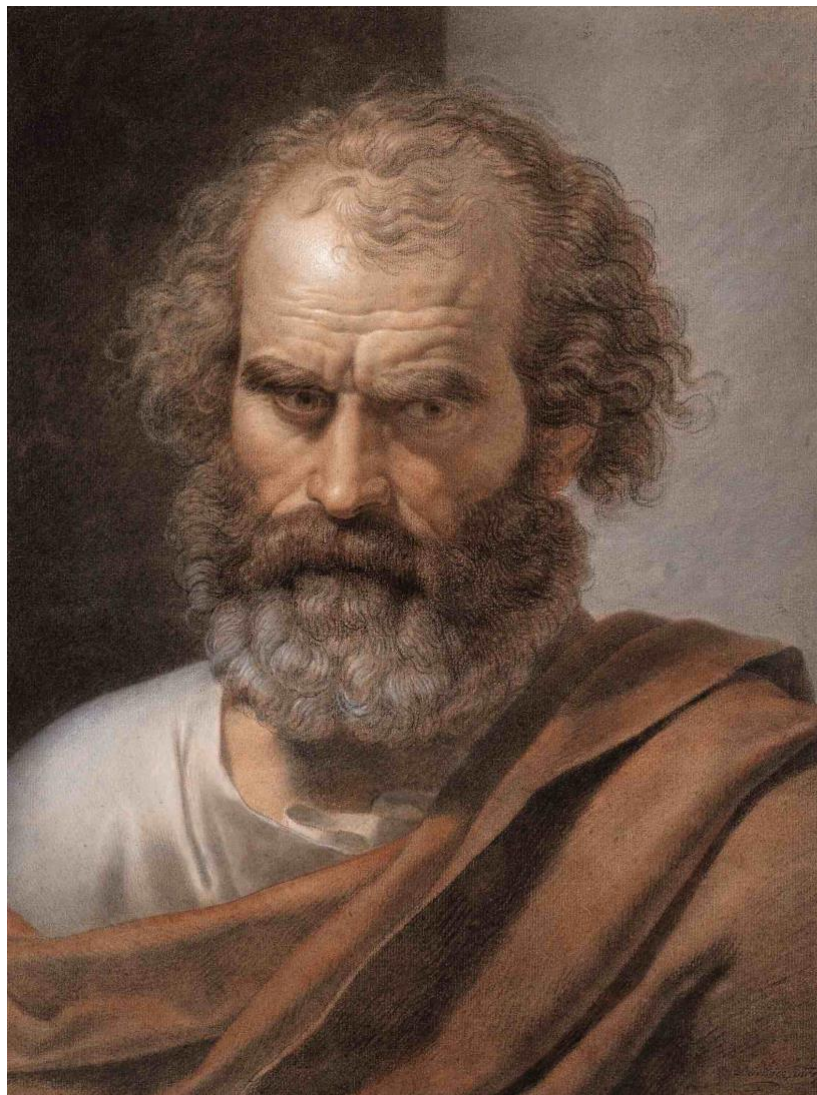
Jean-Bernard Duvivier
(Bruges 1762 – 1837 Paris)

Head of a bearded man

Signed and dated lower right: *JB Duvivier. inv 1790*

Coloured chalk and pastel on paper

59.8 x 37.6 cm. (19 ½ 14 ¾ in.)



This startlingly powerful bust-length depiction of a bearded man is a rare study by the Franco-Flemish neoclassical painter and engraver Jean-Bernard Duvivier. The exceptional quality of the present sheet, coupled with the scarcity of Duvivier's works on paper, makes it an important reappearance within both the oeuvre of the artist and Flemish neoclassicism. Though relatively little known compared to some of his peers, Duvivier has more recently started to receive the scholarly¹ and institutional attention that his artistic talents deserve. Indeed, in each of the last two instances that a drawing by Duvivier has appeared on the market, it has been acquired by a public collection, with an allegorical drawing going to the Musée Cognac-Jay in 2018 (fig. 1) and a preparatory sketch for *Hector lamented by the Trojans* ending up at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels, in 2015.



Fig. 1, Jean-Bernard Duvivier, *Allegorical figure*, 1787, black crayon and white chalk, 34.1 x 41.4 cm, Musée Cognac-Jay, Paris

After an initial artistic education at the Académie in his native city of Bruges, where he won numerous prizes, Duvivier left for Paris in 1783. Here he enrolled at the Académie royale. His talents continued to flourish, winning further prizes in this highly competitive environment, including first prizes for life drawing and for expressive heads. Duvivier studied under his compatriot Joseph-Benoît Suvée, a major neoclassical figure and bitter rival of Jacques-Louis David. Duvivier's *Death of Camilla* from 1785, for example, demonstrates how well the young artist had absorbed the lessons of his master and his natural facility with neoclassical subjects and compositions (fig. 2). Despite these early successes, Duvivier did not achieve the highest honour, the Grand Prix de Rome. His second place was, however, still enough to enable him to travel to Italy in 1790 thanks to the support of Suvée, who recommended his pupil to François Ménégeot, the director of the Académie de France in Rome.

¹ D.A. Rosenthal, 'A Cleopatra by Bernard Duvivier' in *Porticus. The Journal of the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester*, vo. 8, 1985, pp. 13-25; D. Maréchal, 'J. Bernard Duvivier (1762-1837), un peintre et dessinateur néo-classique brugeois à Paris' in *Jaarboek 1995-96. Stad Brugge. Stedelijke Musea*, Bruges 1997, pp. 337-47.



Fig. 2, Jean-Bernard Duvivier, *Death of Camilla*, 1785, oil on canvas, 113 x 146 cm, Musée Tessé, Le Mans

After six years in Italy, and having travelled widely within the peninsula, Duvivier returned to Paris at a moment when the French Revolution entered a calmer phase. He immediately gained an important success when his now-lost *Hector lamented by the Trojans* was exhibited at the Salon to great acclaim. He continued to exhibit at the Salon until 1827, showing both history paintings and portraits. Duvivier also turned his hand to miniatures, engravings and designs for medals. In 1832, the artist received a professorship at the École normale de Paris.

The present sheet was executed in 1790, during Duvivier's first full year in Rome. The bearded man, with his severe and stoic countenance, wavy locks and simple robes, is reminiscent of many of the antique figures populating the artist's history paintings from this period. Placed against a monochrome wall with a shadowed recess, the force and presence of the head, rendered with a fine attention to detail, is undeniable. Duvivier's master draughtsmanship is evident and it is no wonder the artist had such prize winning success at the academies. Indeed, the sheet is in many ways a natural continuation of the expressive heads that Duvivier would have practiced at the Académie royale. In scale, composition and technique, it is quite comparable, for example, to Duvivier's prize-winning head of 1786 depicting Cleopatra.



Fig. 3, Jean-Bernard Du Vivier, *Cleopatra*, 1785, coloured crayons, 51.8 x 40 cm, École des Beaux-Arts, Paris