

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Johannes Bronckhorst
(Leiden 1648 – 1727 Hoorn)

A Study of an Emperor Moth

Pen and ink, brush and bodycolor on vellum
11.8 x 14.5 cm.;
4 5/8 x 5 6/8 in.

Provenance

Private collection, UK.

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Johannes Bronckhorst, born in Leiden in 1648, was taught by his father from an early age. When his father died however, the young Johannes, aged 13, was sent to Haarlem, to work as a pastry baker in a shop owned by his cousin. He kept on drawing as a hobby, and eventually moved back to Hoorn to get married. He would remain there for the rest of his life.

Although he kept working as a baker, his drawings and watercolors of plants, birds and insects became very much sought after. Some were published as engravings, which in turn also became collector's items. Johannes Bronckhorst taught several pupils, the most famous amongst which was Herman Henstenburgh. For the present work, the artist worked on a very fine type of parchment known as vellum. This almost translucent material is a very good medium for conveying the fine details of insects, such as the wings and antennae.

It is evident from the present study of an Emperor Moth (*Saturnia Pavonia*) that the artist took his time to carefully study his subjects. Looking at how the antennae and the velvet-like structure of the wings are reproduced, one can only be amazed by the draughtsmanship of the artist. The insect is not depicted centrally in the present work; it appears the artist did this to achieve a little trompe-l'oeil effect. Furthermore, with the lopsided body of the moth, he brings the insect to life in a wonderful manner.

The present work was seen by Dr. Sam Segal, who confirmed the attribution to Johannes Bronckhorst and who dated it to the last quarter of the seventeenth century