

FRANCESCO GUARDI

(Venice 1712-1793)

Portrait of a Lady

Oil on copper
10 x 8 cm

Provenance:

Private collection, France



While his magical views of Venice and fantastic capricci are very familiar and famous, the figural paintings and portraits of Francesco Guardi are in general less well-known. Early in his career, he seems to have painted a number of religious canvases, undoubtedly under the direction of his elder brother Gianantonio, a painter of considerable talent in that genre. In the later part of the 1750s, however, Francesco Guardi turned largely to the production of the vedute that made him so justly famous, although as Pedrocco noted in "*Francesco Guardi pittore di 'storia'*", he continued to produce portraits even as late as 1783.

His early *vedute* show the influence of Canaletto, but he gradually adopted a looser style characterized by spirited brush-strokes found in our portrait.

The present work would appear to be one of the rare portraits by Francesco Guardi, belonging to a group of portraits miniatures that can be connected on stylistic grounds. It is stylistically

comparable in handling and technique to a *Portrait of a Lady* by Francesco Guardi, oil on copper, oval, 7 x 5,5 cm, Collection Warneck, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 27-28 May 1936, lot 105; a *Portrait of a Lady* by Francesco Guardi, oil on canvas mounted on panel, 10,5 x 8 cm, sale Tajan, 16 June 1995, lot 56;



and a *Portrait of a young Nobleman, in grey and blue waistcoat* by Francesco Guardi, oil on copper, oval, 11 x 9 cm, Sotheby's London, 10 December 1980, lot 19.



Our portrait miniature may be also compared stylistically with portraits by Francesco Guardi: *Portrait of Prince Charles Edward Stuart* (1720-1788), oil on canvas, 55,5 x 43,5 cm, Sale 2 February 2021, lot 34;



and the *Portrait of a boy of the Gradenigo family, possibly Ferigo* (Born 1758), full length, with his pet dove on a ribbon, a white rabbit in the background attributed to Francesco Guardi, oil on canvas, 94 x 74 cm, Sotheby's 30 January 202, lot 526; and its pendant, the *Portrait of a Boy of the Gradenigo Family in Uniform* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts. It is, in fact, the two paintings that were acquired together by the Venetian dealer and antiquarian Dino Barozzi, directly from the Palazzo Gradenigo del Rio Marin, in the Santa Croce sestiere of Venice. Barozzi sold the two paintings separately, with the Springfield portrait going through the Munich dealer Paul Drey to arrive in America by 1935. In his article on the portraiture of Guardi (see Literature), Fiocco noted the shared early provenance of the two portraits¹, and that the present painting has been added to after Barozzi had acquired it, illustrating the painting when it was in its original, three quarter-length format matching that of the Springfield canvas. Indeed, the two paintings are approximately 37 inches in height when the Caramoor portrait is measured without the addition of the lower legs and feet.



¹ G. Fiocco, "Guardi ritrattista," in *Emporium*, vol. XCVIII, 1943, pp. 96, 100, reproduced figs. 5 and 6 (as Guardi, datable circa 1770);

Family tradition had named the sitters in the two portraits as the brothers Pietro and Giovanni Gradenigo. In fact, as Fiocco points out², a more likely identification would be the brothers Gerolamo, born in 1754 (Springfield), and Ferigo, born in 1758 (Caramoor). Fiocco, Morassi ³and Pedrocco⁴ all date the paintings generally to circa 1768-70, which would make the boys of about the right age. Interestingly, a related painting now in the National Museum Wales has since come to light which is very similar to the Caramoor portrait. It depicts a *young girl, perhaps also of the Gradenigo family holding a pet bird on a ribbon*, oil on canvas, 149,5 x 98,7 cm, circa 1768-1770, NMW A 77.



Last example of painting of Francesco Guardi comparable in handling, *The Madonna Annunciate*, oil on canvas, 12 x 9 cm, Provenance: Anonymous sale, London, Christie's, 8 July 1994, lot 210a, where acquired by Adolphe Stein; thence by descent to the present owner, Sotheby's 2 May 2018, lot 78.



² G. Fiocco, "Guardi ritrattista," in *Emporium*, vol. XCVIII, 1943, pp. 96, 100, reproduced figs. 5 and 6 (as Guardi, datable circa 1770);

³ A. Morassi, *Guardi: i dipinti*, Venice 1984, pp. 158, 349, cat. no. 218, reproduced, vol. II, fig. 234 (as Guardi, datable to 1768-70);

⁴ F. Pedrocco, "Francesco Guardi pittore di 'storia'," in *Francesco Guardi*, exhibition catalogue, Museo Correr, Venice, 29 September, 2012- 6 January, 2013, Milan 2012, p. 59 (as Guardi).

Born into a family of painters, Guardi was a Venetian painter, celebrated for his *Veduta* works, or View painting, a genre of Landscapes. Domenico Guardi (1678 – 1716) passed on his artistry to his three sons, Francesco, Niccolò and Gian Antonio. As an individual artist, Francesco had not really gained his own reputation until the 20th century, as he was lumped together with his family's workshop. The family's work is often said to be the last true painters of the Venetian School in its classic form.

Francesco Guardi received his full training starting in 1735 under Michele Marieschi, where he painted his first documented works in the Vigo di Fassa, a Trento municipality. While in Marieschi's workshop, he also collaborated with his brother Gian Antonio, who headed the family studio. They painted religious works, such as a piece signed by Francesco, *Saint Adoring the Eucharist*. It was not until his brother's death that Francesco focused on *Veduta* painting, though he did paint some prior landscape works.

He was of course influenced by the other great Venetian *Veduta* painter of the day, Canaletto (1697 – 1768). He was also influenced by another Venetian *Veduta* painter, Luca Carlevaris (1663 – 1730), who may have been a teacher of Canaletto. As his style evolved, Guardi embraced a more free-handed approach to his cityscapes in comparison to Canaletto's spatial detail. This gave Guardi a more atmospheric style that captured mood and an expressionistic view of Venice. This style was known as *pittura di tocco*, where he would lightly touch the canvas, with a small dotting motion and airy brushstrokes.

Guardi's works were not solely landscape pieces, having painted the *Miracle of a Dominican Saint*, for the church of San Pietro Martire in Murano. He is also well known for his 12 piece canvas of Doge's Feasts in 1763 and then his 1779 piece in the Roncigno Church, Holy Trinity Appearing to Saints Peter and Paul. Between this period in his career, from 1765 to 1770, he painted his well known *Veduta*, *The Lagoon Looking Towards Murano from the Fondamenta Nuove*.

He was commissioned in 1782 to paint canvases for the visit of Russian Archdukes to Venice. In much of his later works Guardi implored the *sfumato* technique for depth, exemplified by his piece *Story of Tobit* for the Church of Saint Raphael Angel in Venice. He also gave more emphasis in his colors with pieces such as *Concerto of Eighty Orphans*. In these last years of his life, Guardi is said to have painted his most personal and expressive works, which included his well known Lagoon views and capriccios.

Guardi was admitted to the Art Academy of Venice in 1782.

