

Lot 1236



Auction	Fine Art
Date	16.05.2025, ca. 15:27
Preview	09.05.2025 - 10:00:00 bis 12.05.2025 - 18:00:00

DENNER, BALTHASAR
1685 Hamburg - 1749 Rostock

Title: Portrait of the Artist's Wife, Esther Denner, formerly Winter.

Date: Ca. 1719/20.

Technique: Oil on canvas.

Mounting: Relined.

Measurement: 53.5 x 42.5cm.

Frame: Framed.

Provenance:

Private ownership, France.

Balthasar Denner is considered to be the leading portrait painter in Northern Europe in the first half of the 18th century. Born in Altona, which at the time was Danish, Denner was already a passionate painter as a child. However, he did a merchant's apprenticeship in Hamburg first and worked in this profession for several years. But his passion for painting was stronger; at the age of 22, Balthasar Denner was accepted at the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin. After his first solo and group portraits received great acclaim, the young painter's reputation quickly became established. Balthasar Denner's clients soon came from the highest circles of aristocracy. He painted regents and noblemen at the courts of Denmark, England, Russia, Sweden, Poland and Northern Germany. But there are also many old 'character heads' in his work. Balthasar Denner's meticulous representation, especially in these paintings, is still astounding today with its almost photorealistic surface designs of skin, hair and fabrics.

The portrait shown here is of a private nature, as the subject is Esther Denner, the artist's wife. He painted his wife many times, and she is easily identifiable (see also Hamburger Kunsthalle, inv. no. HK-406). Esther Denner is depicted in three-quarter profile. The painting is very sparing in terms of colour: the background and clothing appear brown, the flesh tones, collar and bonnet are an ivory-white; the eyes look out at the viewer from the corners of her eyes under dark brows. The veil that Esther Denner has placed over her bonnet and tied in front of her chest is also black. The woman's full mouth is dark pink and her cheeks are a light shade of pink. The summary execution of the body and background leads the viewer to concentrate on the delicately designed and expressive face of the sitter. The black scarf may be a sign of mourning, but it emphasises the liveliness of the face and highlights her dark eyes.

Balthasar Denner's Copenhagen Self-Portrait from 1719 (inv. no. DEP5), also a half-length portrait in shades of brown, showing the artist looking to the right, could possibly be a companion piece to the portrait of his wife shown here.

We thank Helmut Börsch-Supan, Berlin, who confirmed the attribution by telephone on the basis of a high-resolution photograph.

Estimate: 7.000 € - 10.000 €; Hammer: 7.000 €

