

ATTRIBUTED TO
JACOB VAN LOO

(*Sluis, nr. Bruges 1614 - Paris 1670*)

*Portrait of William II of Orange-Nassau (1626-1650) as a Child,
 Head and Shoulders, Holding a Feathered Cap*

oil on canvas
 40.5 x 32.5 cm (15 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ in)

Provenance: Purchased in the 1960s;
 thence by descent to the previous owners.

THIS ENCHANTING STUDY OF WILLIAM II OF ORANGE-Nassau as a boy is strikingly spontaneous and informal in its approach, particularly for an image of a future ruler. The painting's soft focus, harmonious application of colour and gentle, sometimes impressionistic brushwork give it a dreamy quality. William's blue eyes pierce through the canvas, however, reminding the viewer that the subject is a lively, spirited boy. The portrait clearly takes inspiration from Sir Anthony van Dyck (1519-1641), in style and expression, portraying the sitter's sense of character and as well as idealised grace and beauty.

William II was the son of Frederik Hendrik of Orange, the Stadtholder or steward of the United Provinces. On 2 May 1641, at the age of fifteen, William married Mary Henrietta Stuart, the Princess Royal and eldest daughter of King Charles I and Henrietta Maria. Van Dyck's portrait commemorating their betrothal, see fig. 1, reveals William looking slightly self-conscious in his finery in comparison to the present portrait. The contrast between the adolescent aware of his future responsibilities and the child enjoying his freedom is evident. William acceded to the stadholderate in 1647, and proved himself a determined and ambitious leader. He was instrumental in arranging the restoration of his brother-in-law Charles II

to the throne of England. William died in 1650, the official cause being smallpox, although there was a rumour of poisoning. He did not live to see the birth of his son, later William III, King of England, and left Mary widowed at the age of nineteen.

The present work, which may be a portrait in its own right or a fragment from a larger composition is attributed to Jacob van Loo. Van Loo initially trained with his father Jan van Loo (b.1585). From 1642 he lived and worked in Amsterdam, where by the 1650s he was one of the city's most highly regarded painters, along with Rembrandt (1606-1669), Bartholomeus van der Helst (1613-1670) and Ferdinand Bol (1616-1680). Van Loo gained great renown for his group scenes of men and women, which provided inspiration for late works by Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) as well as being precursors to the fashionable conversation pieces of the eighteenth century. An example is the *Concert*, in the Hermitage, which is an engaging and graceful depiction of a lady and gentleman seated with three musicians (fig. 2). In addition to such scenes, van Loo was also known for his portraits of both groups and individuals. In 1660, van Loo was forced to flee Amsterdam on a charge of manslaughter and settled in Paris, where he was accepted to the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture.



Sir Anthony van Dyck,
*William II, Prince of Orange
 and Princess Henrietta Mary
 Stuart, daughter of Charles I of
 England,*
 1641,
 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
 (Figure 1)



Jacob van Loo,
Concert,
 early 1650s,
 The Hermitage,
 St. Petersburg,
 (Figure 2)

