

HENRI-PIERRE DANLOUX

(Paris 1753 - Paris 1809)

Portrait of a Man, Half-Length, in a Grey Coat

oil on canvas
64.7 x 54.8 cm (25½ x 21⅝ in)

THIS INTENSELY STRIKING PORTRAIT REVEALS A powerful man, fixing his concentrated gaze defiantly away from the viewer. His upraised profile with its prominent bushy eyebrows, aquiline nose and high forehead endows him with an outwardly unshakeable authority. The sombre background tones and the subdued hue of his grey coat serve to further accentuate his startlingly pale face. On closer inspection, the translucent quality of his skin, with its faintly bluish hue, lends him a fleeting air of fragility, despite his commanding features. His silvered hair, swept back hurriedly, stands in contrast to the powdered wig, so fashionable in more aristocratic days.

The sitter's entire posture and outfit stand in stark contrast to the previously exotic and frivolous Rococo-style costumes beloved of the French aristocracy. His heavy linen cravat and simple, though still luxurious greatcoat, usher in a new stylistic departure which perhaps suggests that the painting can be attributed to the latter period of Henri-Pierre Danloux's career during the French Revolution, when costume witnessed a decisive and sudden shift. The artist's far freer brushstrokes, notably in the detailing of the sitter's hair also suggest that this portrait maybe a more mature work.

Danloux was a highly successful painter and draughtsman. Brought up by his architect uncle, he was apprenticed, in 1770, to Nicolas-Bernard Lépicié (1735-1784). Three years later he was admitted into the studio of Joseph-Marie Vien (1716-1809) with whom he travelled to Rome in 1775. Interestingly, his Italian journeys - he also visited Naples, Palermo and Florence - provoked more of an interest in landscape and portrait craft than in antiquarian ruins prized by so many of his contemporaries. In this, his early period, Danloux specialised in the intimate genre scenes of his first mentor, Lépicié, as well as in the execution of small-scale portraits.

In 1783, Danloux returned from Italy and settled in Lyon and Paris. In Paris he made the acquaintance of the Baronne d'Etigny who was instrumental in obtaining the young artist a number of important portrait commissions. During the French Revolution Danloux exhibited at the 1791 Salon but, loyal to the French royal family, he emigrated to London in 1792 where he temporarily made his home, executing portraits such that of 1st Viscount Duncan that same year (fig. 1). His diary reveals that he also cultivated relationships with French *émigrés* and obtained portrait commissions from them.

Danloux was influenced by fashionable English portrait painters including Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), John Hoppner (1758-1810) (see catalogue no. 73) and, in particular, George Romney (1734-1802) (see inventory). In 1793 he exhibited at the Royal Academy in London which



Henri-Pierre Danloux, *Adam Duncan, 1st Viscount Duncan*, 1792, National Portrait Gallery, London (Figure 1)

resulted in commissions from a number of British patrons. Among others, he painted the Comte d'Artois, as well as a beautiful portrait of the family of the Duke of Buccleuch.

In 1801 Danloux returned to Paris. Throughout his final years in London, he had begun to work on large subject pictures, and this he continued to do. When his history painting *The Flood* (Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Musée Municipal) was badly received at the 1802 Salon, however, he subsequently only painted occasional portraits, among them that of the writer the Abbé Delille and a few oil sketches of historical genre scenes.

