



A rediscovered pastel by Jean Etienne Liotard

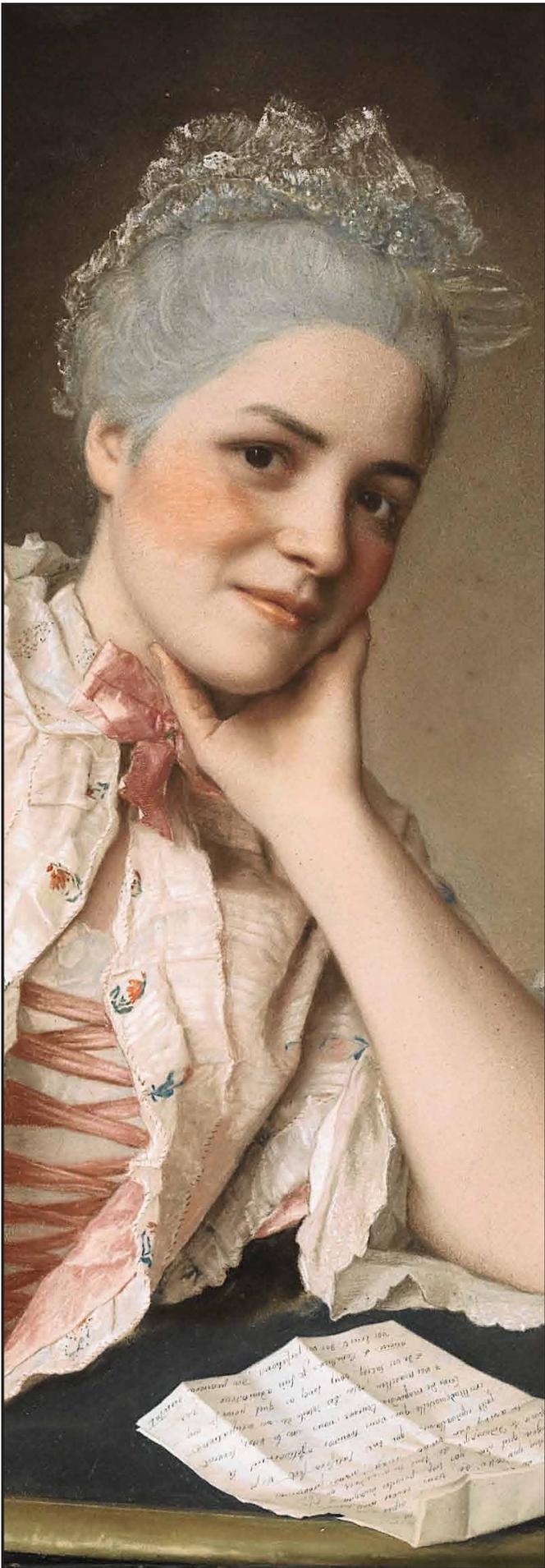
the most important pastellist of
the 18th century

at Sotheby's in Paris

Portrait of Mademoiselle Jacquet

Paris, March 2012 - Sotheby's are pleased to announce that their sale of Old Master & 19th Century Paintings & Drawings in Paris on 21 June 2012 will feature a **very rare work of art by the most important pastellist of the 18th century, Jean Etienne Liotard. Estimated between 300.000 and 400.000 € (400.000-530.000 \$ / estimate do not include buyer's premium)**, this beautifully preserved pastel has been rediscovered by the Director of the Old Master Paintings Department at Sotheby's in Paris, Pierre Etienne, in a collection in the South of France. This portrait of Mademoiselle Jacquet, a French actress at the Opéra (Académie Royale de Musique) in the 18th century, has never appeared before on the art market.

Liotard grew up in Geneva and trained as a miniaturist and enameller – first in Switzerland, then in France under Jean-Baptiste Massé, with whom he also studied engraving. However, apparently bored in his master's studio, the young Liotard left for Italy in 1735, where he met Sir William Ponsonby, 2nd Earl of Bessborough, who offered to travel with him to Constantinople, drawing the costumes and characters they met along the way. Thereafter Liotard continued to travel, through Turkey, Greece, Moldavia (where the prince invited him to paint the royal family), Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, Holland, Italy – and France. During his career Liotard came to Paris for three lengthy stays, and also stopped off in the French capital from time to time en route for other destinations.



The portrait of Mademoiselle Jacquet probably dates either from his second stay in Paris (1748-52), or from his brief trip to Paris in Spring 1757. When Liotard arrived in Paris in 1748 he was already famous. In 1749 he was asked to paint the royal family and, in the wake of this commission, numerous courtiers and other influential figures asked him to do their portraits, ranging from **Madame de Pompadour** and **Voltaire** to well-known figures of the theatre such as **Marivaux** and the great actress **Madame Favart**. It is thus interesting to note that the portrait of Louise Jacquet, also an actress, was probably commissioned during this period.

The work to be offered for sale by Sotheby's is **drawn in pastel, Liotard's preferred medium**. Liotard's first known pastel dates from his trip to Italy in 1736. Also in his autobiography, he explains that he especially appreciated pastel because it facilitated a subtle blend of colours and enabled him to rework a subject without having to repaint it. The portrait, executed with a pronounced delicacy, differs markedly from the standard format Liotard was used to propose, involving a frontal view of the sitter, without hands. The pastel is slightly larger than Liotard's standard works of this type, and the sitter is unusually lent a context, or *mise en scène*.

It is not unusual to find letters in Liotard's portraits, but this one in particular is unusually explicit, and the only one to be partly legible. We can make out a string of compliments addressed to the young lady, such as 'You know how much I am interested in and admire you... and your perfections.' Such details suggest that it was the sitter herself, or one of her admirers, who chose this ambitious mode of representation – one that makes no allusion to her profession as a singer.

Jacquet's name has always been associated with the pastel; it was offered to the ancestors of the current owners by Louise Jacquet herself.

EXHIBITION

Monday 18 June 10h-18h

Tuesday 19 June 10h-18h

Wednesday 20 June 10h-18h

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