

Fine Art / Wed, 3rd February 2021 / Lot 60



LOT 60

Mary A. Mannin, née Millington - Portrait of a Young Gentleman, traditionally identified as Charles Dickens, aged 16, pencil and watercolour heightened with white and gum Arabic, inscribed 'By Miss Millington, Artist, No. 92, Strand, London 1827' verso, 19cm x 13.5 cm, within a gilt frame. Provenance: Anonymous sale; Philips, 16 July 1996, lot 208; with D.S. Lavender, London, 1996; Christies Sale 'A Life's Devotion: The Collection of the Late Mrs T.S. Eliot', Lot 266, 20th November 2013; where purchased by the current vendor, a descendant of Charles Dickens.

Estimate: £700 - £1,000

Condition Report

In good condition, very minor age toning to paper. Possibly slightly faded. Mount and backing may not be archival but not showing signs of staining yet. Gilt frame in good condition with small scuffs to extremities. Unexamined out of the frame.

Additional Information

The work is offered with a photocopy of a magazine cutting with an article about this picture titled 'Young Dickens pulls in £12,500 for first appearance' and suggests that at the time of the Phillips sale it was thought to be the earliest known portrait of the author.

When this work was offered in the more recent Christies auction the following note was included: the earliest known portrait of Dickens is a miniature which was executed in 1830 when he was eighteen, by Mrs Janet Barrow (fl. 1817-1830), an aunt of Dickens. In *The Dickensian* (op. cit.), Gibson Shyvers proposes that Mannin's portrait was the earliest. The suggestion is based on comparing contemporary descriptions of the young Dickens and considering Mrs Mannin as a possible prototype for the literary character of Miss La Creevy in *Nicholas Nickleby*. However, comprehensive iconographical surveys of Dickens portraits such as Kitton's *Charles Dickens by Pen and Pencil* (Sabin & Dexter, London, 1889-90) do not reference Mannin's work and it has not been possible to confirm the identification of the sitter. We are grateful to Dr Florian Schweizer, Director of the Charles Dickens Museum for his help in cataloguing this drawing.