

Finch & C^o



ENGLISH PORTRAIT OIL ON CANVAS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

AN ENGLISH PORTRAIT OIL ON CANVAS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790) SCIENTIST, DIPLOMAT, PHILOSOPHER, INVENTOR AND FOUNDING FATHER OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

GILT WOOD FRAME

18TH CENTURY / CIRCA 1757 – 64

SIZE: 19CM HIGH, 16.5CM WIDE – 7 ½ INS HIGH, 6½ INS WIDE

26CM HIGH, 23.5CM WIDE – 10¼ INS HIGH, 9¼ INS WIDE (INCLUDING FRAME)

LITERATURE

ALTHOUGH INSCRIBED IN INK TO THE REVERSE OF THE FRAME 'BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, PROBABLY PAINTED AS A SKETCH TO A BIG PICTURE ABOUT THE TIME OF FRANKLIN'S VISIT TO EUROPE FOR THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES SEPTEMBER 30TH 1782' IT IS FAR MORE LIKELY THAT THIS STUDY WAS PAINTED AROUND THE TIME OF FRANKLIN'S SECOND VISIT TO LONDON IN 1757.

FRANKLIN FIRST VISITED BRITAIN IN 1725 TO FURTHER HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRINTING TRADE AND RETURNED IN 1726 TO FOUND A NEWSPAPER 'THE PENNSYLVANIA CHRONICLE'. HE RETURNED IN 1757 AS A DIPLOMAT FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA ASSEMBLY AND QUICKLY BECAME INVOLVED IN RADICAL POLITICS. IN FEBRUARY 1759 HE VISITED EDINBURGH WITH HIS SON WILLIAM AND WAS AWARDED AN HONORARY DOCTORATE IN LAW BY ST ANDREWS UNIVERSITY. IN 1762 OXFORD UNIVERSITY AWARDED HIM AN HONORARY DOCTORATE FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDIES. AT THIS TIME HE ALSO BECAME A CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE BIRMINGHAM BASED LUNAR SOCIETY WHOSE MEMBERS INCLUDED SIR ERASMUS DARWIN, DR JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, MATTHEW BOULTON, SAMUEL GALTON AND JAMES WATT, ALL OF WHOM HAD THEIR PORTRAITS PAINTED DURING THIS PERIOD.

IN 1771 HE TOURED THROUGH DIFFERENT REGIONS OF BRITAIN AND WENT TO IRELAND WHERE HE WAS MOVED BY THE LEVEL OF POVERTY THAT HE SAW. IRELAND'S ECONOMY WAS AFFECTED BY THE SAME BRITISH TRADE REGULATIONS AND LAWS THAT GOVERNED AMERICA AND FRANKLIN FEARED THAT IT WOULD SUFFER THE SAME EFFECTS IF BRITISH

COLONIAL EXPLOITATION WAS ALLOWED TO CONTINUE.

AN ARDENT REPUBLICAN, FRANKLIN EMPHASISED THAT THE NEW REPUBLIC COULD ONLY SURVIVE IF PEOPLE WERE VIRTUOUS BOTH IN CIVIC SOCIETY AND IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES. WHEN HE FIRST MET VOLTAIRE AS AN AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE FROM 1776-1785 HE ASKED THE GREAT PHILOSOPHER OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO BLESS HIS GRANDSON.

VOLTAIRE, PLACING HIS HAND ON THE CHILD'S HEAD, REPLIED 'GOD AND LIBERTY' ADDING 'THIS IS THE ONLY APPROPRIATE BENEDICTION FOR THE GRANDSON OF MONSIEUR FRANKLIN'.

FROM 1757 TO 1775 HE LIVED IN LONDON AT 36 CRAVEN STREET AND THIS GEORGIAN RESIDENCE HAS BECOME A MUSEUM DEDICATED TO FRANKLIN'S LIFE AND WORK.