

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Henriëtte Vaillant
(Utrecht 1875 – 1949 Den Haag)

Bust-length study of a man in profile

Monogrammed lower right: *H.V.*
Pastel
47 x 45 cm. (18 ½ x 17 ¾ in.)

Provenance:
Private Collection, Netherlands;
Art Market, Netherlands;
Jop Ubbens, Bussum, Netherlands.



This beautiful and delicately rendered pastel study of a Black model was drawn by the Dutch sculptor Henriëtte Vaillant. Today a little-known figure, Vaillant was a talented sculptor, confident across a variety of different media, who had some success in her own lifetime, exhibiting at the 1925 World Exhibition in Paris, where she received an honourable mention, as well as the Olympics of 1928.

Educated at the Academy of Den Haag and the Polytechnic School in Delft, Vaillant received lessons from, among others, the sculptors Eugène Lacomblé and Arend Odé. She is best known for her glazed ceramics and small sculptures in wood, mostly of animal subjects, though was also capable of working on a larger scale in bronze, usually depicting the human form in this medium.

Being undated, and there being little comparable in her known body of work, it is difficult to date this pastel with any certainty. Though the type of academic head study which would have been practiced as a student in art school, the Art Deco line and form, combined with the very high quality, might argue for a later date in Vaillant's career, perhaps in the 1920s.



Fig. 1, Jan Sluijters, *Study of Rolf*, c. 1918, oil on canvas, 143 x 104 cm, Noordbrabants Museum



Fig. 2, Nola Hatterman, *Portrait of Louis Drenth*, 1930, oil on canvas, 109 x 99 cm, Stedelijk Museum

Depictions of Black sitters were not uncommon in Holland around this time, most notably in the work of Jan Sluijters and Nola Hatterman. For Sluijters, his choice of Black models was explained by his artistic style and techniques: according to him, his models represented a certain colour or shape, or were interesting to depict because they allowed the artist to highlight and create certain contrasts (fig. 1).¹ On the contrary, Hatterman's paintings present a different image of Black sitters, exploring personality and expressing solidarity

¹ E. Schreuder, 'Mooi zwart, hip zwart en zwarte cultuur' in *Black is beautiful: Rubens to Dum as*, Amsterdam 2008, p. 120.

with a marginalised people, as with the beautiful portrait of the trumpeter Louis Drenthe (fig. 2). Although the present work is more of an academic study than a portrait, the sensitivity with which the sitter is captured perhaps aligns it more closely with Hatterman's output.