LOT 25

LOUIS ROLLAND TRINQUESSE
PARIS C.1746 - C.1800

PORTRAIT OF CHARLES GRANT, VICOMTE DE VAUX, IN UNIFORM AS A LIEUTENANT COLONEL OF THE GARDE DU ROI, ATTENDED BY HIS GROOM WITH THEIR HORSES, A FORTRESS BEYOND

oil on canvas

287.6 by 205.7 cm.; 113 1/4 by 81 in.

ESTIMATE £200,000-300,000 GBP

PROVENANCE

Painted for presentation by the sitter to Sir James Grant of Grant, 8th Bt. (1738-1811), in 1781–82;
Thence by descent at Castle Grant, Aberdeenshire, and Cullen House, Banffshire, through his sons, Lewis Alexander, 5th Earl of Seafield and Francis William, 6th Earl of Seafield, to Ian, 13th Earl of Seafield;
By whom sold, on the premises of Cullen House, Christie’s, 23 September 1974, lot 530, for 20,000 Guineas (as Jean Baptiste Marie Pierre);
LITERATURE

CATALOGUE NOTE
This glamorous portrait of Charles Grant, Vicomte de Vaux, was commissioned by the sitter in 1781 as a token of gratitude for being formally recognised as a member of the Scottish Clan Grant. The Vicomte, a sous-lieutenant in the Scots Company of the Garde du Roi, whose family claimed to be descended from the Grants, was to marry a girl from a prominent Breton family who were demanding proof of his lineage. The Vicomte’s case was put forward to the head of the clan, the agricultural improver and politician Sir James Grant of Grant, by another member of the family based in France, Baron Grant de Blairfindy. Baron Grant wrote to Sir James ‘the Bretons are high and mighty, nevertheless they allow the Scots only to be as antient [sic] as them. The lady’s father…told me that he knew very well the ancieny [sic] of the Grants in Scotland, and that he would be very happy that his daughter gave her hand to a descendant of the Alpinian race.’1 Baron Grant de Blairfindy described the Vicomte to another cousin as ‘one of the bravest and finest young men in this army. He will always do honour to any name, and really I think our name much honour’d that he claims it.’2 After much investigation and deliberation on the part of Sir James Grant, the Vicomte eventually received a certificate suggesting his descent from the Clan Grant was ‘highly probable’, with which the Vicomte appears to have been delighted. To commemorate the occasion and thank Sir James the Vicomte sent this, his full-length portrait, depicting him resplendent in the uniform of the French Guards, one hand on the shoulder of his bowed groom who bends to assist his master on with his boots. Sir James hung the painting at Castle Grant and it remained within the Grant family until the bulk of the collection was sold in the Cullen House sale in 1974.

In further correspondence from Baron Grant de Blairfindy, he mentions the Vicomte’s portrait as having been ‘done by the king’s first painter’3 and as such the artist had traditionally been identified as Jean Baptiste Marie Pierre, Premier Peintre du Roi. More recently Dr Colin Bailey identified it as the work of Louis-Rolland Trinquesse.4 Believed to have been Burgundian by origin, Trinquesse was a student at the Académie Royale from 1758 to at least 1770, and although he did not become an academician, he regularly exhibited at the Salon de la Correspondance, an independent learned society supported by donations, showing portraits and genre scenes.5 Another full-length portrait by Trinquesse, depicting the Duc de Cossé-Brissac and his page (present whereabouts unknown) is highly comparable to the present painting.6 Trinquesse is known to have been a highly skilled draftsman, his works smooth and polished in finish and demonstrating an aptitude for the depiction of rich materials, and certainly the delight taken in the rendering here of the Vicomte’s silver brocaded coat and delicately striped silk stockings is clear. It seems that the Vicomte himself shared Trinquesse’s interest in costume; he requested from Sir James two things in return for the gift of his own portrait: a painting of Sir James himself, and a complete Highland costume that he then wore as his masquerade dress when in Paris, and when at Court.7

2. Fraser 1883, Baron Grant of Blairfindy in a letter to Colquhoun Grant, quoted p. 543.
3. Fraser 1883, p. 549.
4. The attribution was proposed at the time of the Christie’s 2006 sale, on the basis of photographs.