Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

Circle of Jean-Marc Nattier - Portrait of a Courtier as Flora, Circa 1740

£795

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REF: 6225

Height: 56 cm (22")

Width: 46 cm (18.1")

Description

A graceful mid-18th-century French portrait depicting a courtier in the guise of Flora, Roman goddess of flowers, spring, and renewal. Painted in oil on canvas and dating to circa 1740, the work belongs to the circle of Jean-Marc Nattier (Paris, 1685-1766), one of the most celebrated portraitists of the French court during the reign of Louis XV.

Nattier was especially admired for his flattering, elegant portrayals of aristocratic sitters, frequently presenting them as figures from classical mythology. This sophisticated visual language allowed the ideals of beauty, virtue, fertility, and refinement to be conveyed through costume and allegory. Here, the identification with Flora transforms the sitter into an image of grace and abundance, linking the cultivated world of the French court with the timeless poetry of antiquity.

The composition reflects the refined sensibility of the Louis XV period, in which portraiture became increasingly theatrical, decorative, and intimate. The artist's treatment of dress, complexion, and symbolic floral imagery would have been intended to celebrate not only the sitter's identity, but also her social standing, taste, and connection to the fashionable culture of the court.

Works from the circle of Nattier retain the elegance and decorative charm that made his portraits so desirable among the French aristocracy. This painting offers a particularly appealing example of the genre: at once a portrait, an allegory, and an evocative record of the imaginative world of 18th-century France.

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