

JOHN RUBENS SMITH

(London, 1775 - New York, 1849)

Portrait of a Bostonian in his library, c. 1810

signed (verso): *JRS*

pencil, pen and brown ink, watercolour

500 x 350 mm

Provenance:

Dr Thomas F. & Tess L. Schutte, Massachusetts

This portrait of a man in his library gives a fascinating insight into American artistic and intellectual culture at the turn of the 19th century. Smith was born in London, the son of the portraitist and engraver John Raphael Smith, and enjoyed a successful career in Britain, exhibiting 45 portraits and watercolours at the Royal Academy between 1796 and 1811. In 1806, however, armed with letters of introduction from Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy, to the three principal artists in Boston at the time, Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Sully, and Washington Alston, Smith travelled to Boston where he settled, established a drawing school, and founded an academy, based on the precepts of the Royal Academy.

Although the identity of the sitter in the present work remains unknown, the pose is evidently derived from Stuart's 'Munro-Lenox Portrait' of George Washington. First painted in c. 1800 Stuart produced three autograph replicas of the 'Munro-Lenox Portrait' while other Boston artists like Sully produced their own copies in the opening decades of the 19th century, widely disseminating the image of Washington with his gaze and left foot directed directly towards the viewer, left hand on hip and right

hand pointed towards the table.

Please contact us for a full catalogue entry.