



Inv. no. 21/1962

VIGILIUS ERIKSEN (1722–1782)
GRAND DUKE PAUL (LATER THE EMPEROR PAUL I), 1764
OIL ON CANVAS

61 X 49 CM

Grand Duke Paul (1754–1801) was the son of Empress Catherine II (the Great, 1729–1796) and Emperor Peter III (1728–1762). In 1762 his father was deposed in a coup d'état. At the time, however, many were disappointed that Catherine II seized the throne for her own and not simply proclaimed herself regent on behalf of Grand Duke Paul. Given this background, the relationship between mother and son was never good. After the death of Catherine II, Paul was proclaimed Emperor Paul I of Russia, and his reign extended from 1796 to his death in 1801.

Vigilius Eriksen has depicted Paul as a child around the age of ten. He wears a white powdered wig tied with a black bow at the back. Around his neck he has a white, tight necktie as well as a black ribbon tied in a bow. The violet-pink suit is adorned with lace, and like his mother (14/1967), he wears the distinguished imperial order known as the Order of St. Andrew. Despite the aristocratic appearance, the

expression on the sitter's face is surprisingly vivid and present, and a hint of sadness is discernible in the heavy, dark eyes.

The portrait of Grand Duke Paul was done in 1764 during Eriksen's time in St. Petersburg, and it is very likely that this work is the painting presented to Catherine II on her son's tenth birthday.¹ She was so enthralled by it that she commissioned Eriksen to create a full-length version, which he did a few years later.² In addition, a number of workshop versions of the half-length portrait also exist. One of these is in The David Collection.

¹ *Vigilius Eriksen, Portrait of Grand Prince Paul Petrovich in the Classroom, 1766. Hermitage Museum, inv.no. ГЭ-9909.*

² *Torben Holck Colding: 'Om Vigilius Erichsen og hans værksted i Rusland' in C.L. Davids Samling. Fjerde Del. Jubilæumsskrift 1945-70, Copenhagen 1970, p. 18.*

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