



Martin Folkes Esq.

Date
1737

Primary Maker
John Faber Jr.

Medium
Mezzotint

Description

Although portraiture had been common in England since the Renaissance, it reached the height of its popularity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, during the so-called Georgian era, under practitioners such as Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, and Thomas Lawrence. Portraits often documented an individual's rank or status and were used by the elite as social and political tools. This print is typical of both printed and painted British portraits of the period. Martin Folkes (1690–1754), the man depicted in this print, was a mathematician, antiquarian, and numismatist who served as president of the Royal Society from 1741 to 1752 and of the Society of Antiquaries from 1749 until his death. Here, he is depicted without a wig, wearing a bonnet and resting his hand on a large tome as an indication of his scholarly activities and the importance to him of knowledge and learning. Over his left shoulder appears a sculptural bust, possibly an ancient Roman portrait head

referencing his interest in antiquity. John Vanderbank (the son of a master tapestry weaver with the same name) painted the original portrait of Folkes (now untraced), after which the engraver John Faber, Jr., created this mezzotint.

Vanderbank began his career as a portrait painter in the 1720s, when Folkes likely sat for him, and completed a couple of royal commissions over his career: a portrait of George I in 1726, the year before the monarch's death, and one of Queen Caroline, George II's consort, in 1736. Faber was born in Amsterdam and moved to England around 1698. He was trained in draftsmanship and engraving by his father before attending the art academy in St. Martin's Lane. He was well known for his mezzotints and was hired by a number of portrait painters to translate their work. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017)

Dimensions

Sheet (trimmed to edges of plate): 13 15/16 × 9 15/16 in. (35.4 × 25.2 cm)