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XVIII-XIX CENTURY
FURNITURE & DECORATIVE ARTS



**HEBE: THE GODDESS OF YOUTH BY SIR WILLIAM
BEECHEY**

Dimensions (unframed): H: 30.5 in / 77 cm | W: 24.5 in / 62 cm

9817

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Hebe: the Goddess of Youth

By Sir William Beechey, R.A. (1753-1839)

Executed in Oil on Panel. Depicting Hebe, daughter of Zeus & Hera, as cupbearer to the gods on Mount Olympus. Inscribed on the reverse: "WBeechey pinxt / 1803 / for Chas Small Pybus Esq". Also bearing an old paper label, now illegible.

English, dated 1803

First presented at the Royal Academy in 1804, where it is listed in the catalogue (no. 6).

A later painting by Beechey, also of Hebe, is in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum.



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Hebe

In ancient Greek religion, Hebe is the goddess of youth, who was the cupbearer for the gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus. Some of the best 18th century artists produced paintings of Hebe including Joshua Reynolds & Angelica Kauffman. Beechey is known to have executed several paintings of Hebe, with the present work for Pybus being the first. It was common for paintings of Hebe to be portraits of real sitters, such as the painting of Marie-Antoinette by Drouais. According to Beechey's biographer, it is believed the present painting depicts Lady Burrell, daughter of the Earl of Egremont of Petworth House.

Charles Small Pybus (1766-1810)

Charles Small Pybus was MP for Dover from 1790 and Lord of the Admiralty 1791-7 and of the Treasury 1797-1803. Pybus had an ongoing friendship with the painter Beechey, who remarked on Pybus' condition and suffering before his death in 1810. A portrait of Pybus by Beechey is now in the Dulwich Picture Gallery, and another, bearing markings on the back in the same hand as our painting, appeared on the market in 2020.

William Beechey (1753-1839)

Beechey is undoubtedly one of the greatest portraitists of the golden age of British painting. He was admitted to the Royal Academy in 1772, first exhibiting there in 1776. Several successful commissions gained him royal patronage, becoming Queen Charlotte's official court painter in the 1790s. Beechey completed a great number of royal commissions, and his portrait of King George III earned him a knighthood. Beechey's flamboyant and free portraits of the turn of the century are considered to be his most colourful and lively.

Literature:

Literature:

Roberts W. Sir William Beechey R.A. Duckworth and Co.; C. Scribner's Sons, 1907, pp. 82-83 (illus. p. 122)

Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain). The Exhibition of the Royal Academy the Thirty-Sixth. Printed by B. McMillan, 1804, p. 3 (no. 6).

Vilardebo, J, "Sous le charme des tableaux anciens," *Connaissance des arts*, no. 179 (January 1967), pp.



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70-73 (illus. p. 72), showing the painting at the Paris residence of Comte & Comtesse B.