

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

German school, c. 1830

Portrait of a bearded man wearing a turban

Black chalk with white heightening on blue-grey paper

44 x 34.5 cm. (17 ½ x 13 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *ges. Stud (?) Kopf*

Provenance:

Private collection, Germany, until 2025.



Despite its obvious quality, this striking study of a bearded man in a turban has so far resisted attribution. Given the inscription and technique, it is likely by a German Romantic era artist and dates to the 1820s or early 1830s.

The annotation at lower right appears to read as 'ges. Stud. Kopf,' making it an abbreviated form of the phrase 'gezeichnete Studienkopf' - literally 'drawn study head' - a functional catalogue label, distinguishing a pedagogical *Studienkopf* from finished portraiture. Similarly inscribed sheets circulated within academies, where professors required students to exercise in modelling light and volume, as well as capturing expression on paper.

Contemporary regional academies - from Munich to Dresden - all required rigorous life drawing, and many encouraged students to circulate finished sheets on the burgeoning art market. Simultaneously, Romantic curiosity about distant lands filtered into German art through travelogues and illustrated journals, fostering an appetite for the exotic.

The sitter's voluminous turban and luxuriant beard identify him not so much as a portrait of an individual as an 'Oriental type', a construct ubiquitous in European visual culture after the Napoleonic campaigns. Nineteenth-century Orientalism fashioned the East into a repertoire of signs - turban, scimitar, bazaar - through which Western artists projected fantasies of alterity. German artists were no exception: whether in the grand tableaux of Paul-Emil Jacobs (Fig. 1) or the later genre scenes of Ferdinand Max Bredt, the imagined Muslim male, nobly bearded and swathed in cloth, served both as picturesque exotica and as a vehicle for formal experimentation in strong light and textile drapery.



Fig. 1. Paul Emil Jacobs, *Scene from the Greek War of Independence* (detail), 1841, oil on canvas. Private collection