

Francis Grose



Connoisseurs examining an antique bust

Reference: 11016

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

Dimensions:

Height:	37.50 cm / 14 ³ / ₄ in
Width:	27.50 cm / 10 ⁷ / ₈ in
Framed Height:	58 cm / 22 ⁷ / ₈ in
Framed Width:	46 cm / 18 ¹ / ₈ in

Signed I.I.: F. Grose delin.1771, inscribed u.I. in pencil: Connoisseurs examining an antique Bust, pen and brown ink and wash over traces of pencil on laid paper partially watermarked with the Strasburg Lily, further inscribed with artist's name and title in a later hand in pencil, verso

37.5 x 27.5 cm.; 14 ³/₄ x 10 ³/₄ inches, framed size 58 x 46 cm.; 22 ³/₄ x 18 ¹/₈ inches

This satirical drawing pokes fun at antiquarianism and art dealing in the late 18th century. Three men examine a bust, the two on the right seem unconvinced of the authenticity of the work, one waving a magnifying glass while the figure in court dress looks a little dubious while the vendor, with two hands resting on the work in proprietorial fashion, seems to be extolling its virtues. Grose treated the subject on other occasions and a print entitled 'The Antiquerers' (see below) was made after his work.

The British were the foremost buyers of classical antiquities in the 18th and 19th century, with thousands of works, both authentic and undoubtedly fake, shipped over to adorn houses all over the British Isles. The proliferation of dilettantes in the field, and the often totally inexperienced practise of what would come to be called 'connoisseurship', provided illustrators of the day with plenty of material.

The artist was born in Greenford, Middlesex, the son of a Swiss jeweller who modelled George II's crown. He was a noted amateur draughtsman, but extravagant living exhausted his inherited fortune and forced him to earn an income from his hobby. The results of his regular antiquarian sketching tours were published as *The Antiquities of England and Wales*, *The Antiquities of Scotland* and *The Antiquities of Ireland* between 1773 and his death. He also drew portraits and figurative works, although they are comparatively rare.

He was a larger-than-life figure of substantial girth and known as the 'Greatest Porter Drinker of the Age'. He died suddenly in Dublin and was buried at Drumcondra, where his tombstone records that Grose 'whilst in cheerful conversation with his friends, expired in their arms without a sigh 18 May 1791 aged 60'.