

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Circle of Karl Wilhelm DE HAMILTON (Brussels c.1668 - Augsburg 1754)

Study of the Head of a Grey Heron

Pen and black ink, with black and brown wash and watercolour, on laid paper, with framing lines in black ink and wash.

Inscribed *Ist die rechte Lebens gröÙe* at the lower centre.

Numbered 1392 at the lower left.

Further inscribed *Carolus Wilhelmus von Hamilton, del.* on the old mount.

235 x 282 mm. (9 1/4 x 11 1/8 in.)

Characterised by long legs, a slender neck, a pointed bill and ashy plumage, the grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*) is a large wetland bird native to Europe, Asia and parts of Africa. An agile predator, the grey heron uses its long yellow-orange bill to catch its prey. The bird depicted here is likely an adult male heron, as the black plumes at the back of its head have already grown out. A grey heron appears in the centre of *The Parliament of Birds*, Karl Wilhelm de Hamilton's best-known work.

Artist description:

The son and pupil of the Scottish still life painter James de Hamilton (c.1640-1720), who settled and worked in Brussels, Karl (or Carl) Wilhelm de Hamilton was one of a large family of artists active in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. His brothers Ferdinand Phillipp (c.1664-1750) and Johann Georg (1672-1737) were both active in Vienna, while Karl Wilhelm worked mainly in Germany, first in Baden-Baden and later in Augsburg, where he served as court painter to Bishop Alexander Sigismund von der Pfalz-Neuburg. De Hamilton specialized in 'forest-floor' still life landscapes and, in particular, bird subjects. Beautifully drawn in watercolour or gouache, his studies of birds are likely to have been produced as independent works of art for sale to collectors. When painting highly finished studies of individual birds, de Hamilton often chose to depict them standing on a single bare twig or branch, and isolated against a blank background. Among his most famous works are several versions of a landscape known as *The Parliament of Birds*, based on a poem by Geoffrey Chaucer written around 1380, each of which incorporates between sixty and seventy different species of birds.