

Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Richard Dadd (Chatham, Kent 1817 - Broadmoor Hospital, Berks 1886)

Study of Middle-Eastern heads

Pencil and watercolour

19 x 14 cm

Signed R Dadd at lower left

Dadd began drawing when he was about 13, and it seems likely that he learnt the technique of miniature painting during his formative years. In 1837 he entered the Royal Academy Schools, London and was regarded as one of the most promising young artists of his generation. His first submission to the Royal Academy in London dates from 1838, when he exhibited his painting *Line Fishing*, and also exhibited in 1839, 1840 and 1841.

In 1842 he left England with Sir Thomas Phillips (1801–67), a solicitor and former mayor of Newport, South Wales, accompanying him through Europe and the Middle East to make drawings and record their travels. A sketchbook (London, V&A) surviving from this journey shows the quality of his draughtsmanship. Its pages are crammed with tiny, vivid and meticulously drawn images of heads, figures, boats, landscapes and architecture. Dadd returned from this journey in spring 1843 showing unmistakable signs of insanity. Whilst in Egypt he had become suspicious and unpredictable, occasionally bizarre and violent in his behaviour, believing that he was persecuted by devils and that he was under the power of the Egyptian god Osiris. This state of mind was to last the rest of his life. In 1844 he was certified insane and admitted to the state criminal lunatic asylum, which was then part of Bethlam Hospital, London. In 1864 he was transferred to the newly built criminal lunatic asylum at

Broadmoor (nr Crowthorne, Berks), where he died of consumption. He continued to paint throughout nearly 42 years of confinement.

The present sheet, which combine crisp drawing with finely controlled washes of colour and bold strokes of shadow, is a beautiful example of Dadd's talent. His mastery of the medium and his meticulous attention to detail is obvious, as on the fascinating collection of pages from one of Dadd's middle-eastern sketchbooks, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.