

FRANK PARTRIDGE

Jean-Baptiste-Andre Gautier D'Agoty

"Le Contrat De Mariage ou L'Attente Nerveuse"

Paris 1740 – 1786

With frame 68 x 55 in high (173 x 140 cm)

Le contrat de mariage ou l'attente nerveuse is an especially rare picture in the artist's *oeuvre*, as Gautier D'Agoty was known primarily for his portraits rather than genre scenes like the one illustrated here. Gautier D'Agoty, one of five sons, distinguished himself as an artist at an early age and developed his career in Paris. His talent was quickly recognized by Marie-Antoinette, who commissioned several portraits, some of which remain at the Musée de Versailles.

The present picture depicts the scene of an impending contract of marriage, as the bride-to-be anxiously awaits, quietly eavesdropping on her elders who debate her future. Linger further in the dark, out of the moonlit shadows, is her lover. This scene exemplifies the language of the *Rococo*, illustrating the flirtatious and romantic nature of this style characteristic in the art of 18th century France. Fragonard's series of paintings *The Progress of Love* at the Frick Collection, share the same themes and subject matter of amorous love that often pervaded the *Rococo*, although no evidence indicates that the two artists ever met or collaborated.

Stylistic and compositional similarities in the present picture relate to other signed works by the artist. The appearance of the architectural structure and its interior here recalls another signed picture by the artist in the Musée Nissim de Camondo. Gautier D'Agoty exhibited his aptitude for portraits in the depiction of the four figures, which resemble a number of the artist's works in the Musée de Versailles. In this work, the artist aptly combined his talent in portraiture with a larger setting of a genre scene, expanding his compositional format to create an exception to his typical subject matter.