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**5 MINUTE EXPERT**

**Mark Weiss on collecting Old Master paintings**

*How would you define an Old Master work?*

An Old Master, historically, has been defined as any painting pre-1800. Of course, whether it is by a true "master" is another question!

*What is the range of prices in this area?*

So many factors govern value; quality, condition, artist, current taste, size etc, so it could be anything from a few hundred pounds, up to the tens of thousands and beyond into the stratosphere. Always try to push your budget to acquire the best that you can afford.

*How should would-be collectors get started?*

Start with finding what appeals, to decide exactly what appeals to your sensibility, whether it be portraits, landscapes, still lives or a specific artist that interests you the most. New collectors can do this through museum and gallery visits or by attending auctions, and I would also advise talking to dealers and other experts. As with any area of collecting, the gradual accretion of knowledge and confidence is part of the fun.

*What should they look out for when considering a purchase?*

Condition is vitally important and should affect the decision whether to buy or not. Is the surface of the painting worn? Is there an opportunity to look at it under UV light to see how much retouching there is? Is there a condition report available? Is there any expertise on the painting? And the basic premise



Masterful: *Lady Jane Thornaghby* William Larkin, 1617

remains the same today as it always has – you should only buy something because you love it, want to live with it and can afford it. Any potential appreciation in value should be viewed only as a bonus.

*Are there common traps or pitfalls to avoid?*

There is a common misconception that buying at auction will ensure a bargain. Also I would suggest that those new to collecting should not follow the crowd but have confidence in their own taste and judgment. After all, you are the one who will be living with the painting.

*Which artist or work would you personally most like to own?*

My, sadly unachievable, dream would be to own a late Rembrandt self-portrait.

Mark Weiss is owner of The Weiss Gallery, the leading dealer in Tudor, Stuart and North European Old Master portraiture; weissgallery.com