



Jefferson David Chalfant, Mary du Pont

Title

Portrait of Miss Mary du Pont

Medium

Oil on canvas

Date

1906

Dimensions

17 × 22 in. (43.2 × 55.9 cm)

Accession number

80.1

Credit Line

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Buck, 1980

Web Description

For over twenty years, J. D. Chalfant was enormously successful as a painter of trompe l'oeil and genre until popular interest in such subjects declined. In 1907 he turned his attention to painting portraits of members of Wilmington, Delaware, society. Chalfant's portrait of Mary du Pont reveals her reported staunch, implacable presence. Proud of her powerful family lineage and comfortable life style, she is said to have required that the artist depict her in her private sitting room seated next to her electric lamp, a new and expensive innovation at the time. With his genre subjects, the artist made extensive use of the camera as a tool to record the placement of figures and props. From photographs he made preparatory pencil studies and then his final paintings. Although a photograph corresponding to the pose and setting of the painting of Mary du Pont has not been discovered, the Museum's collection includes a pencil drawing that matches the scale of the final oil.