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Visual Arts and Film Studies Portrait by John Vanderlyn John Vanderlyn was an American neoclassicist painter. Firstly, American neoclassicism was closely related to English antiquarianism (in fact, was its stream) and looked up to English art (neoclassicism. us). Most of American neoclassical artists traveled to England to study painting. John Vanderlyn was the first successful American painter who traveled in his youth to study neoclassic style of painting to France (worchesterart. org). And that had happened because of man from this portrait.

It's Aaron Burr, widely known as the third Vice President of U. S. and as a man who dueled with Alexander Hamilton and killed him. I've chosen this particular work, because Aaron Burr had played maybe the main role in John Vanderlyn's life. He had noticed young artist's talent and in 1796 sent him to France and paid for his studying. When Vanderlyn had returned after five years to America, Aaron Burr let him stay at his house, where artist could continue to paint and develop his talent without worries (Sardy). Portrait belongs to this period. 1802, oil on canvas.

By that time in Europe (in German especially, but in France too) the Romantic Era had already begun. To my mind, except of neoclassicism we also can see an influence of romantic style in this portrait. Dark background and it seems Burr's light profile floats on a viewer. Also material around Burr's neck's like moving, though his face is steel and calm. In 1922, the architectural historian Siegfried Giedion trying to name an emotional side of neoclassical idea coined the term "romantic classicism" (neoclassicism. us). And I think that's what we can say about John Vanderlyn's portrait of Aaron Burr. There's classicism, but there's also a bit of romantic expression.

I think with this portrait John Vanderlyn wanted to show an eternal part of his patron, to make a classical portrait of a powerful man. But in the same time, to make Aaron Burr's image active and modern.

References

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