Primary Maker: Unidentified artist
Title: Portrait of an Unidentified Woman
Date: ca. 1710
Medium: Oil on canvas
Dimensions: Unframed: 49 1/8 × 38 7/8 in. (124.8 × 98.7 cm) Framed: 57 1/4 in. × 46 7/16 in. × 1 in. (145.4 × 118 × 2.5 cm)
Credit Line: Purchase
Object Number: 1952.80

Object Name: Portrait
Classification: PAINTINGS

Curatorial Remarks:
Typical of provincial British portraiture of the early eighteenth century, this rather curious portrait of a woman had long been identified as a likeness of Edward Hyde, who carried the title Viscount Cornbury and was appointed Governor of the Province of New York and New Jersey by his cousin, Queen Anne, in 1702. Serving as Governor until 1708, Lord Cornbury was reported to have been "universally detested," and a fondness for cross-dressing accompanied his reputation as "half-witted." Popular legend had it that the Governor discredited his office by publicly appearing in women's attire, strolling Broadway - even opening the Assembly - in his wife's clothes. Hyde is also said to have held his state levees at New York, and received his visitors dressed up in complete female court costume, because he represented the person of a female Sovereign, his cousin Queen Anne. Recent scholarship has both removed some of the blemishes added to Cornbury's gubernatorial abilities by nineteenth century
detractors, and reclaimed the likeness as female. However the sitter’s identity, like that of the artist who captured her straightforward gaze without softening her features for the sake of a beautiful picture, remains a mystery.

Related Objects: