Primary Maker: John Vanderlyn
Title: Chancellor Robert R. Livingston (1746–1813)
Date: 1804
Medium: Oil on canvas
Dimensions: Unframed: 46 1/4 × 35 1/4 in. (117.5 × 89.5 cm) Framed: 54 1/4 in. × 43 1/2 in. × 5 in. (137.8 × 110.5 × 12.7 cm)
Credit Line: Gift of Mrs. Anson Livingston
Object Number: 1876.1

Object Name: Portrait
Classification: PAINTINGS

Curatorial Remarks:
Robert R. Livingston is remembered for an extraordinarily accomplished career and is considered to have been one of the most intellectually gifted members of the formidable Livingston family. As a member of the second Continental Congress, he was a co-author of the Declaration of Independence and administered the oath of office to President George Washington. He served as chancellor of the Supreme Court of New York (1777-1801), Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and was one of the key figures in negotiating the Louisiana Purchase with Napoleon’s government. John Vanderlyn (1775-1852) arrived in New York City from Kingston, New York in 1792, and began to hone his painting skills by copying portraits by Gilbert Stuart, among them a painting of Aaron Burr. Impressed by the copy, Burr took Vanderlyn under his wing, sending him to Paris to continue his artistic training at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Moving between New York and Europe for the next twenty years, Vanderlyn devoted himself not only
to portraiture, but also to history painting and panoramas. Vanderlyn, who knew Livingston well, painted his portrait in Paris during his tenure as American Minister to France. The portrait was presented as a gift to the Academy of Fine Arts in New York, of which Livingston was to be the first president. The letter on the table, on which the subject’s hand rests, says “Plan for Establishing an Academy of Fine Arts in New York.”

Related Objects: