Primary Maker: John Durand
Title: The Rapalje Children
Date: 1768
Medium: Oil on canvas
Dimensions: Framed: 58 1/4 × 47 1/4 × 2 1/2 in. (148 × 120 × 6.4 cm)
Credit Line: Gift of Mrs. Eliza J. Watson in memory of her husband, John Jay Watson
Object Number: 1946.201

Object Name: Portrait
Classification: PAINTINGS

Curatorial Remarks:
A strikingly ambitious example of group portraiture, John Durand's (1731-1805) painting of the four Rapalje children, scions of a wealthy Manhattan mercantile family, is considered one of the finest examples of colonial painting in America. Breaking from earlier formulas for group portraiture, Durand's painting lacks a background landscape and therefore simplifies the composition and unifies the group of figures. The sharp edges are typical of his style, as are the bright colors of his palette. The subjects are the children of Garret Rapalje and Helena (De Nyse) Rapalje. From left to right: Garret (b. 1757), George (b.1759), Anne (b. 1762), and Jacques (b. 1752). Durand's portrait of the children's father is also in the New-York Historical Society's collection (1946.201). John Durand first began working in Virginia in 1765, but by 1766 had moved to New York City to paint portraits of the Beekman children for their father James Beekman. Durand’s background and training are unknown, but his use of rococo colors, interest in historical paintings and reference to his name in French has lead art historians to believe
he was born or trained in France. He left New York in 1768 as one of the city’s most celebrated painters and moved to Virginia, where his painting style changed. He lived in Virginia for most of the remainder of his life, though his late paintings never gained him the critical acclaim or popular response that his early New York works did.

Inscribed: Inscription on back: "Jaques Rapalje born in 1752 / Garret dº 1757 / George dº 1759 / Anne dº 1762"

Related Objects: