



**HENDRICK DANCKERTS**

ca.1625–1679

**THE MANOR HOUSE, CRESSWELLS**

Pen, ink, wash with watercolour on two conjoined pieces of paper

11 x 35 inches; 280 x 890 mm

Watermark: Strasburg Bend & Lily

Drawn c.1665

Collections:

Sir Bruce Ingram, Kt., O.B.E., M.C., F.S.A. (1877-1963), Lugt 1405a;

Ingram sale, Sotheby's, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1964, lot 22;

W A Brandt (1902-1978), acquired from the above;

by descent to 2023

This large-scale drawing by the Dutch landscape painter Hendrik Danckerts is an exceptionally rare survival. The panoramic view depicts the fifteenth-century manor house at Cresswells, Bray in Berkshire and was made in about 1670. What makes this sheet even more remarkable is that the painting for which it is preparatory survives and is now in the collection of Brighton Museum and Art Gallery. Surviving topographical landscape watercolours made in Britain before 1720 are exceptionally rare, this grand and beautifully articulated sheet affords a singular insight into a lost genre.

Hendrick Danckerts was most likely born in The Hague in about 1625. His brother, Jan Danckerts, was a history painter and engraver who is recorded joining the Guild of St Luke in The Hague in 1632, Hendrick was admitted as an engraver in 1651. The brothers travelled to Italy in 1653 and to Britain sometime before the Restoration. Jan Danckerts's illustrations to Sir Robert Stapylton's translation of Juvenal's *Satires* were engraved by Wenceslaus Hollar and published in 1660. The earliest record of Hendrick is at his marriage to Theodosia Hugh of Staffordshire at St James's Chapel, London in October 1664. Over the next couple of decades Danckerts became a hugely successful landscape painter, working for a wide range of clients. In 1669 the diarist Samuel Pepys commissioned four panels for his dining room from the 'famous landskip painter', Pepys called the resulting paintings

‘mighty pretty’. Danckerts painted landscapes – both topographical and ideal – for a roster of aristocratic interiors, but his most considerable patron was Charles II. In 1665 the king commissioned some large classical landscapes in Gloucestershire and a view of the completed canal works at Hampton Court, by 1688 the Royal Collection contained twenty-nine prospects by Danckerts.

Only a handful of drawings by Danckerts survive. The present sheet is similar in format and approach to a series of panoramic views in the collection of the British Museum. Two drawings depicting views of Badminton House, from the East and North, show Danckerts working on the same scale. The drawings record the house and landscape on two sheets of conjoined paper presumably made in preparation for larger oils and perhaps to be shown to the patron, Henry Somerset, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Beaufort<sup>1</sup>. What makes the present drawing so distinct is Danckerts’ use of watercolour wash; this appears to be the only coloured drawing by Danckerts of a country house to survive. Danckerts shows a timber framed house, probably dating from mid-fifteenth century, seen from the end of a recently planted avenue of trees. John Harris noted that little is known of the house itself, it apparently passed in 1537 to the College of St George, Windsor and in 1652 it was leased to Thomas and Peregrine Wilcox, by the Dean and Chapter. By the eighteenth century it was in the possession of the Keeke family but was subsequently demolished. Danckerts’ finished painting survives, giving a sense of his working method and the function of his drawings.

In the completed painting the house appears closer and larger than it does in the drawing. This raises the possibility that the present drawing was made on the spot; there is certainly a naturalism to the way the buildings are surveyed behind the screen of trees, in the drawing one of the trees obscures details that appear in the final painting. In the painting Danckerts has shifted the position of the trees and slightly thinned the vegetation to give a legible outline of the house, with its gables, windows, copula and chimneys. Danckerts has also introduced a series of figures to animate the composition. Danckerts’ use of wash and watercolour gives a surprisingly informal feeling; the sheet feels less like a Grand Baroque prospect than a plein air watercolour of a century later. As such this rare and beguiling watercolour raises all kinds of questions about the development of landscape painting in Britain and the contribution made by the highly skilled diaspora of Dutch artists working in Britain after the Restoration.



Hendrick Danckerts  
Oil on canvas  
30 ½ x 72 ¼ inches; 777 x 1837 mm  
*The Manor House, Cresswells*  
c.1670  
Brighton & Hove Museums

---

<sup>1</sup> Danckerts’ view of *Badminton House from the East* contain colour notes, but no colour washes. See Lindsay Stainton and Christopher White, *Drawing in England from Hilliard to Hogarth*, exh. cat. London (The British Museum), 1987, p.161, cat. no.122.