



Miss Angel: The Art and World of Angelica Kauffman, Eighteenth-Century Icon

Angelica Goodden

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A word was coined to describe the condition of people stricken with a new kind of fever when the Swiss-born artist Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807) came to London in 1766. 'The whole world', it was said, 'is Angelicamad.'

One of the most successful women artists in history - a painter who possessed what her friend Goethe called an 'unbelievable' and 'massive' talent - Kauffman became the toast of Georgian England, captivating society with her portraits, mythological scenes and decorative compositions. She knew and painted poets, novelists and playwrights, collaborating with them and illustrating their work; her designs adorned the houses of the Grand Tourists she had met and painted in Italy; actors, statesmen, philosophers, kings and queen sat to her; and she was the force that launched a thousand engravings. Despite rumours of relationships with other artists (including Sir Joshua Reynolds), and an apparently bigamous and annulled first marriage to a pseudo Count, Kauffman was adopted by royalty in England and abroad as a model of social and artistic decorum.

A profoundly learned artist, but one who is loved, above all, for her tender adaptations from classical antiquity and sentimental literature; a commercially successful celebrity yet also a founding member of The Royal Academy of arts; the virginal creator of sexually ambivalent beings who was one of the hardest-headed businesswomen of her age, Kauffman's life and work is full of apparent contradictions explored in this first biography in over 80 years.

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