

THE LIMNER COMPANY



Attributed to ORSOLA URBANI

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman, wearing gold-braided blue jacket and matching waistcoat, white lace shirt, his hair powdered

Circa: Circa 1755-60

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Watercolour on ivory

The distinctive stipple on this portrait connects it to the work of the earliest portrait miniatures painted on ivory in Italy by Rosalba Carriera (1673-1757). One proponent of this style was Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787), who painted portrait miniatures with the gummy paint dotted on to the surface. The result was a highly realistic portrait, built up in soft layers and at close inspection revealing a pointillist technique.

One of Batoni's students was the talented Orsola Urbani, known to have been working under Pompeo Batoni in 1738, the year that she completed a portrait miniature of Henry Benedict Stuart [previously with Philip Mould & Co.]. It is likely that Urbani and Batoni worked on several miniatures together during the 1730s. Unfortunately, there are only a handful of extant works by Urbani, including portraits of a young girl in the Burghley Collection and Prince Victor Amadeus of Savoy (1725-1796) which was for sale at Christie's in 2004 and a 'Portrait of Saint Cecilia Playing a Bass Viol with a Cherub Holding Music', at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (2017.397). Very little is known about Urbani, but she was certainly still working in Rome in 1757, around the date of this present work, and this portrait is likely to represent a Grand Tourist.