

# THE LIMNER COMPANY



**BERNARD LENS III (1682 - 1740)**

**Portrait miniature of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), facing to the right, wearing armour and a white lawn collar**

Watercolour on parchment

Rose gold frame with spiral cresting

Oval, 1 ⅞ in (28mm) high.

Bernard Lens was known as both a miniaturist and a copyist. Here, we can see a copy of Samuel Cooper's (1609-1672) unfinished portraits of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), one of which is held in the Buccleuch collection[1], the other in the Harcourt family collection[2]. Lens also created another copy of this portrait, previously held in the collection of the Duke of Portland, which he left unfinished, as the original was.

The portrait certainly isn't flattering, and though it may be kinder than others of Cromwell, it cedes to the Lord Protector's wish to be portrayed 'warts and all'. There is a cool-grey tone to the portrait, which ages the sitter, something that is also achieved through the depiction of his thinning hair and almost translucent skin.

Cromwell became the Lord Protector in 1653. In the years leading to this, he had established himself as the leader of the New Model Army, and defeated the King in the Civil War. He was known for his puritanical views and rule of the country before his death in 1658. In the 19th century, there came a rekindled interest in the leader, which led to portraits like this one, and others by artists such as Henry Bone (1755-1834) and Christian Richter (1678-1732).

Lens would have picked up on this trend from being active within the art world of the period. He was part of the Rose and Crown Club from 1704, and established himself as a Limner, however painted copies of larger Old Master Paintings throughout his career, too. The present miniature is on vellum, however lens was also known for being one of the first British artists to paint on ivory in the miniature form.

[1] C. 1653, see <https://blht.org/186-bowhill-091001-186-large-samuel-cooper/> .

[2] 1657, Now at Compton Verney, see [https://www.comptonverney.org.uk/cv\\_collections/oliver-cromwell/](https://www.comptonverney.org.uk/cv_collections/oliver-cromwell/) .