

THE LIMNER COMPANY



RICHARD COSWAY (1742 - 1821)

Portrait miniature of Prince Henryk Ludwick Lubomirski (1777–1850), as a boy, wearing loose, frilled chemise, his hair worn long and curled

Circa: 1787

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: 9JB2Q6AT

Oval, 3in. (76 mm) high

Engraved by F. Bartolozzi, 1787, as part of a series called, *Infancy, Childhood, &c.*; Gertrude Clarke (c.1880-c.1973), 'Prince Henry Lobovmirsky', Bonhams, London, 5 September 2006, lot 166

The Renowned for his beauty, in 1783 the six year old Henryk was abducted at the age of six by a distant relative, Marshal-Princess Elżbieta Izabela Lubomirska (1736-1816), in her quest for a male heir. This act made him heir to one of the most prestigious Polish aristocratic families. The artist Richard Cosway would have met the boy during his time in Paris, where Princess Izabela fled in 1785 when her opposition to King Stanislaw August Poniatowski became too compromising in her native Poland.

The Cosways visited Paris in 1787, where Maria stayed with the Princess and her young protégé. The salon of the flamboyant Polish princess, initially located in a suite of apartments at the Palais Royal rented from the duc d'Orléans, soon emerged as one of the centres of high society. Still corresponding with Thomas Jefferson, Maria appears to have busied herself with the hectic social whirl of which the Princess was at the centre.[1]

The marshal-princess Izabela, sparing no expense and honouring the Neoclassical theories of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, regarded Henryk as the incarnation of ideal beauty. The present portrait would

have been painted in 1787, when Richard Cosway was among many prominent artists commissioned by the Princess to paint her adopted son.[2] Vigée Le Brun painted him as 'Love of Glory' in the same year, where the child was represented à la grecque in the form of an allegorical portrait.[3] She also entrusted portraits of her surrogate son to such preeminent artists as Angelica Kauffmann and Antonio Canova. Henryk went on to become, like his adoptive mother, a political activist and patron of the arts.

The portrait must have left the Lubomirski family at some point, as it passed through several eminent collections in the late 19th/ early 20th century – including that of the titan financier John Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913).

[1] Maria Cosway began an affair with Thomas Jefferson, then based in Paris as the American minister to France, in 1786.

[2] G. C. Williamson, writing in J.P. Morgan's magnificent catalogue in 1906, suggests that this portrait was painted while the boy was in England with Michal and Isabella Oginski, whose portraits Cosway also painted, while staying with Simon, Count Woronzow. Henryk's sister, Princess Lubomirski, was also painted by Cosway as a young woman and sold at the Cosway 'Varnese' sale in June 1796. It seems more likely, however, that the present miniature of Henryk dates closely to the 1787 engraving by Bartolozzi and not to the Oginski portraits which date to 1793.

[3] Exhibited at the Paris Salon, 1789, no. 78. Now in the Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (74.4). Le Brun painted the Henryk twice more – once in 1793-95 and again as an adult in 1814.

Exhibitions

Burlington Arts Club in 1889

Literature:

G.C. Williamson, Catalogue of the Collection of Miniatures of J. Pierpont Morgan, Vol. II, No. 282, p.60-61 (Henry, Prince Lubomirski, plain gold frame, set in balls of white enamel)