

THE LIMNER COMPANY



PETER CROSSE (Circa 1645 - 1724)

Portrait miniature of James Scott (formerly Crofts), Duke of Monmouth and first duke of Buccleuch (1649–1685)

Circa: Circa 1681-84

Circa 1681-84

Watercolour on parchment

Later turned wood frame

Oval, 90 mm (3 ½ inches) high

As the illegitimate son of Charles II, James, Duke of Monmouth was brought to England in 1662. The following year, he married Anne, Countess of Buccleuch. In 1678, Titus Oates' revelations of the pretended Popish Plot, gave impetus to the popular clamour for a Protestant succession and encouraged the anti-papists to press for the recognition of the Duke of Monmouth as the legitimate heir to the throne. Charles II denounced James and sent him into exile.

After a short spell in Holland, he returned to England but every effort to reconcile with his father failed.

This portrait was likely painted at some point in the following few years, along with others by Peter Crosse. For example, another portrait by Crosse, painted a few years earlier in 1681, shows the Duke in similar costume, wearing armour, a lace cravat and the sash of the Garter.[1] This miniature, and others painted during the early years of the 1680s, may have been presented to Monmouth's supporters as he attempted to promote himself as the legitimate, and Protestant, rightful heir to the English throne.

[2] Interestingly, this miniature would appear to relate closely to a 1684 plumbago by James White (1645-1703), which may have been intended for engraving and further dissemination of Monmouth's image.

In 1683, when the Rye House plot was discovered, James was found guilty of treason and conspiring to assassinate both the King and his uncle, the Duke of York. He was later granted a pardon by Charles,

after agreeing to provide the names of his confederates. He lived again in Holland until Charles II's death in 1685 prompted his return to England and the Monmouth Rebellion.

Monmouth boldly (but foolishly) landed at Lyme Regis on 11th June that year and was proclaimed King at Taunton. Following his defeat at Sedgemoor by Royal troops on 5th July, James fled, disguised as a peasant. His capture and incarceration in the Tower swiftly followed before his execution on Tower Hill just ten days later.

Peter Crosse was a trusted court artist for Monmouth's uncle Charles II and had been close to the internationally renowned limner Samuel Cooper. Crosse worked in a very different technique to Cooper.

As the entry by John Murdoch in the ODNB notes, 'the stipple is larger, softer, and more sombre, the head emerging from the dark background with a blurred silhouette and the face simplified in its structure and strongly lit from the front'.

[1] Sold Sotheby's, 06 December 2018, lot 26.

[2] Another similar miniature, although slightly reversed in terms of the light source on the sitter's armour, was signed and dated 1681 by Peter Crosse and sold Bonhams, 12th July 1993, lot 280. Welbeck Abbey also houses another miniature by Crosse of the same subject, dated 1681, proving that several miniatures were commissioned by court artists over this span of years.