THE LIMNER COMPANY



RICHARD CROSSE (1742 - 1810)

Portrait miniature of Miss Turner of Uxbridge, wearing riding costume trimmed with gold braid and a large plumed hat with bows

Circa: Circa 1786

Circa 1786

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: 1R4V2ZSQ

Signed and inscribed verso: Richd. Crofse / No 42 / Mifs Turner

Gilt-metal frame enamelled and surrounded with interlocking ribbon detail, alternating with seed pearls

Oval, 63mm (2 $^{1}/_{2}$ inches) high

Miss Turner appears to have been painted by Richard Crosse at least three times, with some of these portraits commissioned by enamoured admirers. One version which was in the possession of the Templer family, was possibly commissioned by Henry Line Templer when he sat for his own portrait for Crosse in the same year. The sitter's popularity as a subject is also evidenced by the engraving taken from Crosse's largest version of the portrait, in which Miss Turner sits reading a book. Engraved by Robert Thew in 1790 and titled 'Reflections on Werter [sic]', this is a somewhat surprising title, as in

neither of the miniatures do the sitter's untroubled features suggest her being moved by the powerful emotions expressed in Goethe's tragic novel The Sorrows of Young Werther, first published in 1774.

Throughout the eighteenth century the market and town prospered. Equally important was the coaching trade. At the end of the century up to forty stage coaches a day passed through the town, all stopping to change horses, plus all the private traffic. There were over fifty inns and alehouses to cater for this traffic and four breweries to supply them. The town was so congested that in 1785 the High Street was widened and improved. The Market House was demolished and rebuilt in 1789. Between 1798 and 1805 the Grand Junction Canal was opened, which greatly increased the trade through Uxbridge.

Crosse was born on 24 April 1742 in Knowle, in the parish of Cullompton, Devon; to parents John and Mary Crosse. His father was a lawyer, and his family were members of the landed gentry. Crosse was, like one of his sisters, completely deaf and never able to speak. He had at least six siblings.

Crosse began painting as a hobby, as was the fashion amongst the gentry. At the age of 16 he won a premium at the newly created 'Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce' (the Society of Arts) in London. He then moved to London and, like Richard Cosway and John Smart, he studied at the new drawing school of William Shipley, the founder of the Society of Arts. He also studied at the Duke of Richmond's Gallery.

Crosse exhibited his work at the new London societies: at the Society of Artists 1760–1796, the Free Society 1761–1766, and the Royal Academy 1770–1796. He lived and worked in Henrietta Street, in Covent Garden, London from 1760. His brother acted as intermediary between Crosse and his clients.

Basil Long in his book "British Miniaturists" (1929) regarded Crosse as a very accurate draughtsman who painted without hesitation or retouching and who will one day receive recognition for his sound, if modest, work.

Despite not being able to hear or speak, Crosse was very successful, and was highly regarded by his distinguished clientele. His clients included the Prince of Wales, and the Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester. He painted his works mainly with watercolour on ivory; he also executed a few miniatures in enamel, a difficult and not always successful medium; as well as painting portraits in oil.[2]

[1] It is not evident to which version of Miss Turner's portrait this payment refers, but is most likely to be the large rectangular version of the present work, showing the sitter seated three-quarter length holding a book (see Schidlof, The Miniature in Europe, 1964, vol.III, pl.145, fig.271).

[2] Biography based on information obtained from deafhistory.eu; https://www.deafhistory.eu/index.php/component/zoo/item/richard-crosse?Itemid=155

Literature:

Richard Crosse's ledger records that on the 20 February 1786 he 'received of Miss Turner for her D[itt]o 3rd size £12 12s/ (see Long 1929, p.77).[1]