

THE LIMNER COMPANY



FRENCH SCHOOL (17th CENTURY)

Portrait of a Nobleman, wearing a scarlet-lined damask gold embroidered robe and white lace jabot, over a red silk bow, his hair worn long

Circa: Circa 1670

Circa 1670

Oil on copper

Later gold frame

Oval, 60 mm (2 ³/₈ inches) high

This oil shows a nobleman wearing the latest fashion of the later seventeenth century – a heavy damask indoor gown or pelisse and an extravagant red bow. The latter would have been inspired by Philippe I, Duke of Orléans (21 September 1640 – 9 June 1701), the younger son of Louis XIII and brother of the 'sun' King Louis XIV. A pink or red silk bow (sometimes worn with armour) often denoted those distinguished men who were close to the King.

Oil on copper portraits were relatively popular in France in the latter part of the seventeenth century, with many distinguished painters working in this technique. Although the artist of this portrait is unknown, they were clearly aware of the work of artists like Pierre Mignard and Antoine Mathieu. Oil portraits on copper were also popular in England – in fact artistic fashions and fads crossed the channel when the Duke married Henriette, sister of King Charles II. More robust than a miniature on vellum, less expensive than enamel portraits, oil portraits retained colour and allowed the artist to be expressive in painting clothing or delicate lace – as seen here. The lack of knowledge on firm names for artists practicing in this specific medium has led historians to believe that they were perhaps itinerant practitioners. The quality of many works on copper does, however, suggest that these artists received professional training.