THE LIMNER COMPANY



WENCESLAS HOLLAR (1607 - 1677)

Portrait miniature of Jane Seymour (c.1509-1637), blue background, turned to the left, wearing crimson dress trimmed with black onyx cabochon, gold oversleeves, a gem set gold brooch with pendant pearls, two strand necklace with pendant set with carnelian and black onyx cabochon, gable headress with lappets and black veil over her shoulder

Circa: Circa 1640

Circa 1640

Watercolour on parchment

Turned wood mount

Circular, 52 mm (2 inch) diameter

Wenceslas Hollar (1607-1677) was primarily known as an engraver, and trained in Frankfurt. Hollar became acquainted with Thomas Howard, 14th Earl of Arundel, and went on to travel to London with him in 1636. Hollar continued to travel throughout his career, but died in London in 1677. Throughout this period he created engravings with a range of subjects, including topography, botany, and portraits. However, there are only a few known portrait miniatures by Hollar, making this a rare and important addition to his oeuvre.

It would have been under the patronage of Arundel that Hollar came across Hans Holbein's portrait of Jane Seymour, that was then held in his renowned art collection. On the back of the present miniature, it is clearly labelled as a copy after the Arundel portrait, now held in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. There is also a known engraving of the Queen by Hollar, from 1648, holding the same inscription[1].

Jane Seymour (c.1509-1537) was the third wife of Henry VIII, and died giving birth to his only son, Prince Edward. Before becoming Queen, she served both Katherine of Aragon (1485-1536) and Anne Boleyn (d.1536). One of the only other known portrait miniatures by Hollar depicts one of these Queens,

bridging a connection between the limited work he was doing in this medium.

Hollar's portrait miniature of Queen Katherine of Aragon (1485-1536), can be found in the Royal Collection. Previously identified as Margaret Roper (1505-1544), this more recent reidentification places it within a tradition of Hollar copying portraits of Henry's Queens. Both of these miniatures can be seen as an attempt by Hollar to engage in a new media, the subject matter possibly dictated by his patron Arundel.

[1] A copy of the engraving can be found at the National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG D4061.