THE LIMNER COMPANY



BERNARD LENS III (1682 - 1740)

Portrait miniature of a Lady, in décolleté green dress, gold embroidered frogged bodice, wearing a red and yellow scarf over her upswept hair

Circa: Circa 1720-1730

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Watercolour on ivory

Signed with monogram ‘B.L’

Gilt-metal beaded mount within turned wooden frame

Oval, 762 mm (3 inches) high

The artist, Bernard Lens, was a leading miniaturist working in London between 1710 to 1740. Whilst possibly self-taught, Lens achieved a considerable reputation by holding numerous Royal Appointments under both George I and George II. He was the first British limner to work on ivory and specialised in the care of miniatures, particularly on vellum, restoring and reframing old family portraits for his aristocratic patrons. In addition to his pioneering of these novel techniques, Lens was acted as a dealer and consultant for some of the great connoisseurs of the age.

Lens was a conscious follower of his predecessors, particularly of those who gained international fame such as Nicholas Hilliard and Samuel Cooper. In addition to his own compositions, the artist gained considerable fame as a copyist replicating portraits by these figures from aristocratic collections.

Whilst the sitter of this portrait is unidentified, it is a fine example of Lens’ work during the height of his career when he was at his most in demand. It previously passed through the esteemed miniature collection of the late Valerie Eliot, wife of poet T.S. Eliot.