THE LIMNER COMPANY



ARNAUD VINCENT DE MONPETIT (1713 - 1800)

Portrait miniature of a Lady, wearing a red gown trimmed with gold, a gold-striped gauze veil in her powdered hair

Fixé-sous-verre

Set into a gold bracelet clasp with pearl strand bracelet, the reverse of the clasp with four goldsmith's marks

Oval, 35 mm (1 $^{3}/_{8}$ inches) high

The portrait painted for this bracelet, given to Arnaud Vincent de Montpetit, is a rare example of a miniature painted in the "eludoric" or "fixé-sous-verre" (fixed under glass) technique. Montpetit refined the technique, which was extremely difficult to master. These oil paintings were created on fine cloth (apparently under a thin layer of water) and then stuck onto the reverse side of an embossed glass with water-soluble glue (presumably animal glue).

The lavish clothing worn by the sitter here is reminiscent of the fashions worn by Louis XV's most famous mistress, Madame de Pompadour (1721–1764), one of the most famous figures of her time. In 1759, the Department of Foreign Affairs commissioned from Montpetit three portraits of King Louis XV to be used as royal gifts: two of them were destined to be mounted on bracelets (as with this example) for which he was paid 240 livres each in April of that year. The third one, for which he was paid 360 livres was mounted on a box encrusted with 338 diamonds. In June 1760, he supplied a further portrait of the king to the Department of Foreign Affairs to be mounted on a gold box encrusted with diamonds, emeralds and rubies by the goldsmith Ducrollay.

According to Ann Massing ('Arnaud Vincent de Montpetit and Eludoric Painting', Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung, 1993, vol. 7, no. 2, p. 360), 'Montpetit is said to have painted forty portraits of the King.' Nevertheless, only very few of those miniatures seem to have survived. A rectangular fixé-sous-verre of King Louis XV by de Montpetit was exhibited at the Reichenberg Exhibition of 1903, owned by Prince A. de Rohan, Sichrow (see L. R. Schidlof, The Miniature in Europe,

Graz, 1964, II, p. 569). The current work is therefore a rare survival of this technique, in the setting in which it was meant to be first worn by the owner.