

THE LIMNER COMPANY



J MUSSARD

Portrait enamel of William Henry, Prince William, later Duke of Clarence and William IV (1765-1837), wearing a British Naval uniform with a blue sash, powdered hair

Circa: Circa 1780s

Circa 1780s

Enamel, with small firing crack

Counter enamel reads, "Muss. Pinx." (meaning "He painted it")

Oval, 38 mm (1 ½ inches) high

The counter enamel of this portrait has a label (possibly from an exhibition) where the artist is stated as 'Muss.' [1] The full stop suggests that this is a shortened version of the name 'Mussard', a family of artists hailing originally from Geneva but often working further afield during their careers. One possible candidate as the artist for this enamel is 'J. Mussard', the least well-known member of the family, who was exhibiting at the Society of Artists between 1763-1768. The better known Andreas (fl. 1724-65) and Jean Antoine Mussard (born 1707) would have been stopped working (the former) or potentially too old to have executed the present work.

While the exact artist behind this enamel remains uncertain, it almost definitely portrays Prince William, later William IV (1765-1837), third son of George III (1738-1820). The young boy is wearing a breasted blue coat with white collar tabs, a naval uniform commonly worn by midshipmen in the mid-18th century. His blue sash, however, distinguishes him as part of the British Order of the Garter. William entered the Royal Navy when he was just 13 years old, serving as a midshipman from 1780 till 1785. His brothers affectionately referred to him as "our dear blasted seaman," a nickname that would later evolve into 'The Sailor King'.

The closest comparable portrait of the young Prince can be found in the Royal Collection Trust, painted by Jeremiah Meyer (1735-89) dating back to approximately 1780. This particular portrait is believed to have been created to commemorate William's voyage to America in 1779, during which he served on the 98-gun ship named the Prince George. It is likely that multiple portraits were produced before William's departure, with this one possibly being attributed to J. Mussard. The portrait in question exhibits a far more formal tone when compared to the famous Benjamin West painting depicting the young Prince once aboard the Prince George. King George III was resolute in ensuring that his son would enjoy no special privileges in the navy, insisting that he should have no marks of distinction.

This portrait is a much more formal one in comparison to the infamous Benjamin West painting of the young King once onboard the Prince George. King George III was determined that his son should enjoy no special privileges in the navy, insisting that he should have no marks of distinction.

1] Although there is an artist named 'Muss' (Charles Muss), he was born in 1779, close to the date that the portrait would have been completed.