

THE LIMNER COMPANY



NOAH SEAMAN

Portrait enamel of a professional, probably a lawyer, wearing black robes over white lawn bands and a small frill collar

Circa: Circa 1730

Circa 1730

Enamel on metal

Later gold frame

Oval, 44 mm (1 ³/₄ inches) high

This portrait, by the enameller Noah Seaman, is a rare depiction of a professional gentleman, portrayed in attire which announces his important working status. The sombre garb and professional wig are indications that the sitter was a lawyer or doctor. This depiction is unusual on such an intimate scale, as portrait enamels were usually exchanged in a romantic capacity, suggesting that this particular portrait was painted to commemorate a significant event in the sitter's life.

Noah Seaman and his brother, Abraham, worked in a very similar manner, their enamels quite different to the soft, stippled paintwork employed by their contemporaries. Very little can be gleaned about their early life or training but there would appear to be a connection to the Netherlands as a number of examples of their work are extant in Dutch collections. These include two enamels in the Dutch Royal Collection. While it is traditionally assumed that Christian Friedrich Zincke had the virtual monopoly on enamel portraits of this period, it seems this was not necessarily the case, as those patrons sitting for the Seaman family appear to have come from the higher echelons of society, either by dint of their noble status or notoriety – including George Frederick Handel (dated 1741) and the Duke of Portland. The Victoria and Albert museum have a similarly painted portrait, the face contoured in reddish hues.[1]

[1] Victoria and Albert Museum, London, GILBERT.273-2008

