THE LIMNER COMPANY



Attributed to JACQUES-ANTOINE ARLAUD (1668 - 1746)

Probably Charles Lennox, first duke of Richmond, first duke of Lennox, and duke of Aubigny in the French nobility (1672–1723), wearing black gown/doublet with lace cravat and red ribbon, black hat with red and white feathers

Circa: Circa 1685

Circa 1685

Watercolour on vellum

Oval, 2 ¾ in. (70 mm) high

Silver frame with filagree border, the reverse with cipher ‘ADR’ and ducal coronet on a leather panel

Cipher: ADR – standing for Aubigny, Duke (of) Richmond. Circa 1682 (when in France with his mother).

Charles Lennox, first duke of Richmond, first duke of Lennox, and duke of Aubigny in the French nobility (1672–1723), was the natural son of Charles II and his mistress Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth. Born a mere ten months after his mother was introduced to the King, he was elevated to the English and Scottish peerage at the tender age of three, as Duke of Richmond, Earl of March and Baron of Settrington on 9 August 1675 and, the following month, the Scottish titles of Duke of Lennox, Earl of Darnley, and Lord of Torboulton. Around 1675, Charles was portrayed in a miniature since attributed to Susannah Penelope Rosse, now in the Royal Collection Trust.

It can be noted that in this portrait of the duke, aged here between ten and twelve years of age, he bears a strong resemblance to Samuel Cooper’s 1666 portrait of Frances Stuart, also known as ‘la belle Stuart’ – a courtier who resisted Charles’s zealous charm offensive to become his mistress. When Frances married for love, and without the king’s approval, to Charles Stuart, Duke of Lennox and Richmond, the king’s revenge was to eventually bequeath her late husband’s titles to his illegitimate son – the son of a mistress who could perhaps have been Frances herself. The presumably deliberate reference to the famous portrait of Frances Stuart, painted by Cooper showing her in riding garb, makes this point.[1] Cooper’s portrait miniatures were known all over Europe and, as one example in the Patek Philippe Museum in Geneva shows, were copied by contemporary artists such as the Swiss

enameller Jean Petitot (1607-1702).[2]

The technique in this miniature is closest to another Swiss artist, Jacques-Antoine Arlaud (1668-1746). Arlaud is said to have arrived in Paris around 1688, where he worked in the studio of Largilliere before being patronised by Madame and the Duc d'Orleans. Louise de Kérouaille took her son to France during the 1680s, in 1682 and 1685 – and he retuned again in 1688. It is possible that he met the young Arlaud in France or Switzerland on one of these visits.

Louise's visit with her son in 1685 was on the death of the king, Charles II. The portrait of the child may have been commissioned in France for Louis XIV, who presented the child with the French title the Duc d'Aubigny. Charles returned to England in 1692 during the reign of his first cousins, William and Mary. He remained on good terms with his English relations, despite fears that his heart was with the Jacobites after his brief conversion to Catholicism in 1685. He served as Lord of the Bedchamber to King George I until his death in 1723.

If this portrait can indeed be fully identified as Charles, it adds to his sparse early iconography. Described in 1684 by John Evelyn as 'a very pretty boy', the royal pretensions in this portrait also align with his mother's ambitions and connections.

[1] Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-4308. Frances Stuart is shown in Cooper's portrait in riding garb, which was cut along the same lines as male dress. She choose to be portrayed in this dress several times, causing comment from Samuel Pepys, who witnessed her being painted at Whitehall and commented: 'a lovely creature she in this dress seemed to be'.

[2] This enamel was shown for the first time at Philip Mould & Co. in Dover Street in the 2008 exhibition 'Secret Faces'. It is illustrated in the catalogue P. 88-89