

THE LIMNER COMPANY



HORACE HONE (1754 - 1825)

Portrait enamel of a Lady in the guise of the Madonna, wearing blue gown and white headdress, holding a wooden cross and wiping tears with her hand

Circa: 1809

1809

4 cm (1 ⁵/₁₆ inches)

Enamel on copper

The counter enamel signed and dated 1809 and inscribed on counter-enamel 'Horace Hone/ ARA Pinx/ 1809/ London'

This portrait of a lady in the guise of the Madonna is unusual in Hone's oeuvre. According to an article written in 1969, Horace Hone had one daughter named Mary Sophia Matilda (d.1832) and this portrait may represent her.[2]

Hone was the son of one of the most renowned artists of the 18th century, Nathaniel Hone, who was a founder member of the Royal Academy in London. Not only renowned for his artistic talents, Horace's father was also the centre of a scandal when, in 1775, the Academy received a complaint from another founder member, Angelica Kauffman, that Hone had included her as a nude in his submission of a painting entitled 'The Conjuror'. Hone denied this and in fact even overpainted the offending image, but was informed that the painting would still be excluded from the exhibition. The painting was not only demeaning to Kauffman but made another pictorial allegation against none other than Sir Joshua Reynolds, then the President of the Royal Academy. Here Hone clearly referred to Reynolds's established practice of "borrowing" from the work of old masters, identifying the actual sources.

Hone was determined that his controversial and offensive painting should be shown and opened, on the same day of the Royal Academy's opening day, an exhibition in which he showed solely his own work.

This was clearly intended to act as a counterpoint to the RA's annual spring exhibition - both shows

were open every day of the week except Sunday; both cost a shilling admission and both had a free catalogue.

Hone's second son Horace likely learned the art of enamel painting from his father. On 19 October 1770 he entered the Royal Academy Schools when his age was recorded as '17 11th Febry next', indicating that he was born on 11 February 1754. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1772 to 1822 and was elected an associate of the academy in 1779. In 1782 he went to Dublin, where he established a successful practice, living in Dorset Street. He painted in watercolour and enamel as well as producing engravings. In 1795 he became miniature painter to the prince of Wales and the current enamel, as stated by the artist himself on the counter, was painted during this time.

This portrait or subject painting stands out as, in contrast to his father, Horace's career largely followed a conventional path of commissioned portraits. His social connections gave him access to the most fashionable crowd of the day – including actresses and the friendship circle of George, Prince of Wales, which could not be further from this small, religious work.

Hone left Dublin in 1804 and worked in Bath that year before setting up a practice at his house in Dover St., London. He exhibited miniatures at the Royal Academy until 1822. His last years, when he suffered from mental illness, are documented in the diary of Joseph Farington. He died 24 May 1825 in Dover St. from an illness attributed to the effects of gout, from which he had suffered for many years. He was buried at St George's chapel, Bayswater Road, London.

[1] The painting by Dolci cannot currently be located.

[2] Hone had married Sophia Ursula Draper in 1779.

Exhibitions

Possibly, Royal Academy 1810 as 'A Madonna after Carlo Dolci'[1]