

THE LIMNER COMPANY



SWISS SCHOOL (circa 1830)

Portrait miniature of an Unknown Lady, wearing a purple dress

Circa: circa 1830

circa 1830

Watercolour on ivory (licence TFJEHY95)

Oval, 65mm. (2 1/2 in.) high

Gold locket

The dating of this portrait is possible because of the fashions that the unidentified sitter is wearing. They are typical of the romantic period; large, puffy sleeves and voluminous hair that has been rolled and knotted upon the wearer's head. Though these sleeves are not fully visible due to the size restrictions of the miniature, just enough of their fabric is visible to imagine how largely these would have bellowed out below the shoulders of the sitter. More specifically, the dress that our sitter wears can be dated to the first half of the decade, as from 1836 onwards[1] these sleeves, and dress in general, began to take on a 'droopier' form, in which such a large sleeve would not have begun as far up the wearer's arm as can be seen here.

A similar story can be told about hair styles of the second half of the decade. Whereas in the earlier years topknots and rolls on the top of the head were common, styles again moved downwards, and were defined by middle parts, and loops surrounding the ears, as were styled by Queen Victoria. Therefore, whoever the sitter in this portrait was, she was a lady of fashion and aware of the styles of the time.

She is also adorned with fine jewellery, a sign of her status. Long earrings and a large necklace accentuate the length of her neck, a sign of beauty, and fill the otherwise empty space between the height of her hair and the somewhat low cut of her dress, which sits in the middle of her shoulders. As has been stated- this is very much a depiction of the fashion, and feel, of the romantic period, in which

there was an emphasis on emotion and drama, which can certainly be sensed here.

[1] Fashion History Timeline, '1830-1839', <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1830-1839/> .