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Attributed to MICHEL BRUN (d.1753) (1698 - d.1753)

Portrait miniature of Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) (1720-88), wearing steel cuirass and over it ribbons of the Garter and the Thistle, scarlet cloak lined with ermine, his wig powdered white and tied with black ribbon

Circa: Circa 1748

Circa 1748

5.5 cm (2 $^{1}/_{8}$ inches)

Watercolour on vellum

Gold locket frame

This exceptional miniature of Prince Charles Edward Stuart is based on a lost pastel by the artist Maurice Quentin de La Tour (1704-88), which had been exhibited as 'Le Prince Edouard' in the Paris salon of 1748.[1] The Prince paid 1200 livres on 15 January 1750 for the portrait but the original, last heard of in Florence in 1785, is now known through the engraving by Michel Aubert [Fig.1].[2]

Although the pastel is now lost, we do have information about its original commission and function, as well as details of who copied the work in miniature. Charles likely sat for the portrait after his return to Paris in 1747, but he was ejected from that city in December of the following year. After his departure from Paris, the pastel stayed with Charles's banker, Waters, until March 1752 when La Tour was asked to collect the work.

The correspondence and papers of George Waters[3], banker to the prince, holds valuable information concerning copies by two miniaturists taken directly from the pastel itself (not from engravings).[4] In 1749, Waters noted that the artist 'Kamm' (likely Daniel or Jean-Frédéric Kamm[5]) was painting portrait miniatures after the pastel. Several of these still exist, including an unidentified example in the Royal Collection.[6]

Although miniatures of the Prince were required for distribution among political and financial supporters, they were also commissioned by those with a close personal relationship with Charles. By 1748, Charles had begun an affair with Marie-Anne-Louise la Trémoille (née Jablonowska), by marriage the princesse de Talmont (d. 1773). Marie-Anne was his second cousin once removed and was, 48, much older than the prince, when their affair began. She borrowed the La Tour pastel in order for copies to be made by 'M. Le Brun' – most likely Michael Le Brun (d.1753) – the second miniaturist noted by Waters[7]. Confusingly, there were two artists, father and son, with the forename 'Michel', but it is likely the elder artist who made these copies, as his son is not noted as painting miniatures until 1756. Furthermore, Wortley's 1948 transcript refers to 'Le Brun le Pere'. The Le Bruns were close to the crown, with the younger Michel working for the court of Louis XV and obtaining the official title of 'painter to the King'.

No portrait miniature has yet been identified as by the artist 'Le Brun'. The present work shows a distinctive hand which cannot be associated with any other artist working in miniature at this time – it appears circumstantially likely that this be by Michel Le Brun[8]. There is only one other extant portrait which appears to be by the same hand[9]. Set in a frame which gives the artist as Sir Robert Strange, it is now part of the collection of the West Highland Museum in Fort William, Scotland [Fig.2]. Several small pictures and miniatures of Charles Edward Stuart are attributed to Robert Strange, including a miniature in the Royal Collection dated to circa 1745 [RCIN 421604] [Fig.3]. However, neither the work in the West Highland Museum, nor the image in the Royal Collection show technical similarities with the stippled, monochrome ink drawing in the Scottish National Galleries[10][Fig.4]; a technique consistent with an artist working primarily as an engraver.[11]

The sheer volume of Stuart iconography, including the many variants and copies, can lead to confusion and assumptions (most famously perhaps, in the instance of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's pastel of Henry Stuart, Cardinal York, which until 2008 was assumed to be of his brother Charles).[12] The emergence of a portrait miniature such as the present work is an important addition both to the iconography of the 'Young Pretender' and the political and personal importance of the format of the portrait miniature.

[1] Charles was called prince Edouard in France because they already had a prince 'Charles' - de Lorraine.

[2] An example of this engraving can be found the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

[3] He was a relation of Abbé James Waters, scion of a long-standing Jacobite family who had served the Stuarts from at least 1735.

[4] This information is taken from typescript notes assembled by Helen Stuart Wortley in the 1940s (a document which she was unable to complete before her death) and edited by Henrietta Taylor in 1948. Entitled 'Portraits of the Stuarts in Exile', these are an unpublished transcription of a selection of the

Stuart Papers in the Royal Archive. A copy can be accessed in the Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery, London.

[5] Most art historians, auction houses etc give this artist the forenames of Johann Daniel or Jean-Daniel, but Neil Jeffares has suggested that Jean-Frédéric Kamm, as the only known artist with that surname painting portraits, who was additionally artist to Stanisław Leszczyński, the King of Poland who shared a mistress with Charles Edward in the princess of Talmont; see https://neiljeffares.wordpress.com/2016/04/02/la-tours-stuart-copyists-the-kamm-family-and-others/

[6] RCIN 420133, called 'British School, eighteenth century' but almost certainly by Kamm.

[7] From Helen Stuart Wortley's unpublished transcript, 1948, 'Madame de Talmond wrote that, if Charles will not let her have it for herself, will he at least let her have it for 3 days that M. le Brun, miniature painter to the King and Dauphin, may copy it for her'.

[8] Wortley's 1948 transcript also lists a miniature done by Antonie Alexandre de Marolles (ca.1705-1752), however his technique is again different to that used in the present work.

[9] A third, related, miniature exists, offered at Lawrence's Auctioneers in 2017. Attributed to Pompeo Batoni, the artist has used a much more distinctively stippled technique, and it is likely a later copy. The present author has been unable to consult a high-resolution image of this third version.

[10] https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/3354

[11] With thanks to Dr Bendor Grosvenor for pointing out this example by Le Strange (private correspondence, January 2025).

[12] Grosvenor, Bendor. "The Restoration of King Henry IX: Identifying Henry Stuart, Cardinal York." The British Art Journal 9, no. 1 (2008): 28–32. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41614793.