THE LIMNER COMPANY



JOHANN BAPTISTE GOESTL (GÖSTL) (1813 - 1895)

Portrait miniature of the Artist's Son wearing Turkish costume

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: DRCM96J3

Gold-plated metal frame

This endearing portrait of the artist's son was possibly inspired by Sir William Ross's (1794-1860) portrait miniature of Queen Victoria's eldest daughter in Turkish dress [fig. 1], which had received rave reviews on its exhibition at the Royal Academy in the summer of 1851, one critic commenting: 'The miniature has all the best qualities of a beautiful picture – the features are most charming in colour – this is one of the painter's very best productions'.[1]

A small circular head and shoulders copy of Ross's portrait, of a similar size and composition to the present work, was made by Victoria's enamel painter, William Essex (1784-1869) and given by the queen to her husband on their wedding anniversary in 1851 [fig. 2]. It's not unreasonable to speculate that Goestl also made a gift of the present portrait to his wife, which, being so small, could have been neatly set in a piece of jewellery.

While there is no record for the source of the either the princess's or the present sitter's costumes, they reflect the fashionable interest in the arts and dress of the East at this time. The Orient (including present-day Turkey, Greece, the Middle East, and North Africa) had long tantalised western artists. Following a series of conquests and military campaigns in the region, it became more accessible and a popular setting for European history and genre painting with many European artists travelling to the Near East. The decorative arts, textiles, furniture, architectural motifs and fashion were soon to follow suit and Orientalism swept the continent.

Goestl is said to have worked in the porcelain factory in his home city of Vienna, where he painted ceramic placques.[2] He is recorded by Leo Schidlof as initially training at military school however, and only coming to painting after working for a short time as a bank clerk.[3] He later became a pupil of Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793-1865), one of the most significant Austrian artists of the age.

[1] Art Journal, 1851, new series, vol. lll, p. 161

[2] Duffy, S., Vogtherr, C. M., Miniatures in The Wallace Collection, 2010, p.164

[3] Schidlof, L., p.300