

THE LIMNER COMPANY



SAMUEL BERNARD (1615 - 1687)

A portrait miniature of a lady of the French court, wearing a blue dress with gold braid and lace border, a large pearl and diamond jewel on her shoulder, with light-coloured hair

Circa: circa 1676

circa 1676

Watercolour and bodycolour on vellum

Oval, 35mm (1 2/5 in) high

Gilt metal frame with scroll top

This miniature was historically part of a set of portraits by French artist Samuel Bernard. Though the sitter remains unidentified, the set was recorded as a group of portraits of members of the court of Louis XIV, and included portraits of the King, Queen Maria Theresa of Austria, and the First Minister of State, Jean-Baptiste Colbert. We can assume that the sitter here was an integral part of the King's close circle.

It should be noted that the woman portrayed here bears close resemblance to a sitter in a portrait by Jean Petitot (1607-1691), in the Louvre[1]. Given that both Petitot and Bernard were close in age and came from staunch Protestant (Huguenot) backgrounds, it is likely that the two men knew each other. It is therefore perhaps no surprise that they enjoyed the same circles of patronage.

Bernard himself, a student of both Simon Vouet and the miniaturist Alexandre Du Guernier, was one of the founders of the academy of painters and sculptors in Paris in 1648, where he became professor in 1655. A landscape and a miniature with a religious subject by Bernard were exhibited at the Salon of 1673. He remained there for thirty-three years before his expulsion on religious grounds in 1681. In 1685, and only after he had converted to Catholicism, he was allowed to re-enter the academy. Bernard was not only known for painting but also for his engravings. A book about the life of Bernard and his children was published in 1914 by a member of the family who previously owned this set of miniatures,

Elisabeth, Duchess of Clermont[2].

[1] Inventory number INV35691-recto

[2] E. Clermont-Tonnerre, Histoire de Samuel Bernard et de ses enfants, 1914.

Exhibitions

Evreux, 1864;

Paris, Exposition Universelle, 1867.