THE LIMNER COMPANY



JOHN HOSKINS the Elder (c.1590 - 1664)

Portrait miniature of a Lady, wearing black dress with white lace border, white lace collar and black rosette, pearl earrings and pearls in her curled hair

Circa: Circa 1635

Circa 1635

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

Watercolour and body on vellum

Signed in gold, centre right

John Hoskins was a miniature painter, who lived and worked in London from around 1634, especially for the English court. Although little is known about Hoskins' life, he is renowned for making extensive copies of Anthony van Dyck's works throughout the 1630s, including producing portrait miniatures from van Dyck's large-scale paintings of Henrietta Maria (1609-1669), who married King Charles I in 1625 and became Queen Consort. In 1640, King Charles I granted Hoskins £200, with the conditions 'provided that he work not for any other without his Majesty's licence'.

The present sitter shows many similarities with the queen in her style of dress and hairstyle - imitation being the sincerest form of flattery (see Fig.1 and Fig.2). Known for her lavish spending, Henrietta Maria exerted a strong stylistic influence on the English court, importing swathes of jewellery, clothes and trends from France and attracting criticism from Puritan moralists who disapproved of her taste for grandeur. The above spiky lace collar and detailed lace dress trim, with its broad-shouldered and low, square neckline, is typical of the 1630s. Black satin dresses, along with the use of ribbons and rosettes, were another French fashion that Henrietta brought to the English courts and which the sitter emulates in the portrait. Depictions of Henrietta Maria often reveal looped strings of pearls held together with black ribbons or rosettes, as above, and the sitter is also modelling the tight ringlets that Henrietta Maria wore, which launched a wave of copyists at the English court. The portrait was perhaps painted towards the second half of the decade when Hoskins arrived in London, and a gradual simplification of fashion and a reduction in ornamental decoration began to emerge, but the use of pearls and lace, as well as the shape of the neckline, dresses the sitter in a style most prescient in the mid-1630s.

[1] 'John Hoskins', National Portrait Gallery, < https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp07134/john-hoskins?search=sas&sText=hoskins&role=art>, accessed 17.02. 2025.