THE LIMNER COMPANY



SUSANNAH-PENELOPE ROSSE (c.1655 - 1700)

Portrait miniature of Charles Taylor (b.1656), aged 32, wearing brown cloak and white jabot, his natural hair worn long

Circa: 1689

Dated 1689

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

Watercolour on vellum

Original gold frame with pierced spiral cresting, the reverse engraved with sitter's coat of arms surrounded by inscription CAROLUS TAYLOR GEN. NATUS 8o DIE DECEMBRIS 1656: DELINEATS 22oDIE: FEBRUARII: 1689.

This portrait of a gentleman named Charles Taylor survives in its superb gold frame, engraved on the reverse with a Latin inscription which tells us that he sat for his portrait (‘delineatus’ - to sketch or draw) on the 22nd February 1689. The intricately engraved coat of arms, with the head of a unicorn, is that of the Taylor family.

The portrait is typical of those painted by Rosse, who is assumed to have spent most of her life in London, even while her parents moved to The Hague to follow Princess Mary in her marriage to William of Orange. Held in the V & A, Rosse is known for a selection of works within a notebook, all of which were originally attributed to Samuel Cooper. The fact that this portrait was previously attributed to Charles Beale, the son of the artist Mary Beale, is a typical fate for many of Rosse’s works. It may not come as a surprise that Rosse had a style so similar to Cooper’s, however. George Vertue, writing in his notebooks about Rosse’s education, notes that she would have not only been influenced by her father, the miniaturist Richard Gibson (c.1605-1690) but also by copying the drawings that she had

access to by Cooper[1].

The high quality of the gold frame and the engraving on the reverse also begs the question of the maker of this locket. Susannah-Penelope's husband Michael Rosse was the crown jeweller and, if he were not the maker, would have been able to guide Mr Taylor towards a member of the Goldsmith's Company to produce such fine goldwork and engraving.

[1] Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 'Rosse [née Gibson], Susannah-Penelope', J. Murdoch, 2004.

Exhibitions

Portrait Miniatures from the Merchiston Collection, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 23 September – 11 December 2005, no.7

Literature:

Stephen Lloyd, Exhibition Catalogue, 2005, p.22-3 and 57, ill.col.pl.4