THE LIMNER COMPANY



FRANCIS SYKES (1715 - 1771)

Portrait miniature of a lady, wearing a white dress, and a white surcoat with a yellow border, her hair worn up and curled with a purple ribbon

Circa: 1765

1765

Watercolour on ivory

Signed and dated ‘F. Sykes / 1765’ (lower left)

Oval, 1 3/8 in (36mm) high

Gilt metal frame with woven hair reverse

Francis Sykes was both a portrait miniaturist and an enameller, having worked for the Duc d’Orleans in the 1750s. Previously, little was known about the artist apart from the fact that he was a member of the Society of Artists, however research by Neil Jeffares has allowed him to be connected to multiple artists called F Sykes known to be working in this period.[1] Sykes was born in 1715 to William Sykes, also a Limner. He studied with Christian Friedrich Zincke (1683-1767), hence his skill in enamel painting, examples of which can be found in the V & A[2], and the Royal Collection.[3] In 1743 Sykes was working in the Hague, living with his wife, and here he began his family, having three children while living in the city. Soon after he moved to Paris, and then back to London in the mid-1750s.

The influence of the work of Zincke is evident in this miniature, the sitter of which has not been identified. Painted in 1765, when Sykes was working in London, the sitter is also likely to have been based here. It was in this period that Sykes was also exhibiting at the Society of Artists. The lady wears an elegant dress, and her hair accessories are typical of the period. Only a few years after this miniature was painted, Sykes would die in Yarnmouth.

[1] See article: Francis Sykes and His Family, 22 November 2015, https://neiljeffares.wordpress.com/2015/11/22/francis-sykes-and-his-family/.

[2] Accession number: LOAN:GILBERT.274-2008

[3] Collection number: RCIN 4733