THE LIMNER COMPANY



Attributed to ROWLAND LOCKEY (c.1566 - 1616)

Lady Anne Cobham (d. 1612), wearing embroidered black and gold dress, wired, white standing ruff and black cap with gold trim

Circa: Circa 1595

Circa 1595

Watercolour and bodycolour on vellum, on card

Oval, 48 mm (1 ⅞ in) high

Silver locket frame

Portrait miniatures attributable to Rowland Lockey are extremely rare, but the present example has been given to his hand by many eminent art historians, including Sir Roy Strong. The case for this particular Rowland Lockey is based on the stylistic and technical similarities between this work and those miniatures by his master, Nicholas Hilliard.[1]

Technically, the present miniature is complex – the black silk of the gown is drawn in lattice ribbons over an embroidered under gown, with an intricate thread weaved in loops. Each pearl on the sitter's neck and cap is carefully highlighted with silver (now blackened through oxidisation). Shell gold is added to the cap to give the jewelled element weight, and the ruff is carefully drawn with each layer carefully delineated (albeit in a much thinned down white pigment compared to Hilliard's three-dimensional depiction of lace). Clearly the artist of this miniature had an intimate understanding of the technical elements which Hilliard guarded so carefully. The fact that the two men worked alongside each other, meant that, unlike Isaac Oliver (c.1565-1617), Lockey was a colleague, not a rival.

Lockey is recorded as joining the household of Nicholas Hilliard in 1581 as apprentice to the artist who would only have been in his mid-30s, but who was already considered the chief image-maker of

Elizabeth I. Since his childhood therefore, Lockey was also likely learning his craft from Hilliard's mastery.[2]In his Treatise concerning the Arte of Limning, Hilliard comments on the difficulties infinding good assistants who can work to his exceptional standard. 'The good workman also which is so excellent dependeth on his own hand, and can hardly find any workmen to work with him, to help him to keep promise, and work as well as himself, which is a great mischief to him'.[3] As Elizabeth Goldring notes, many of Hilliard's 'schollers' would have been trained in an unofficial capacity, freeing the ever insolvent Hilliard from paying for their board and lodging.[4]

Despite the circumstantial and documented evidence, which places both Lockey and Isaac Oliver as successors to their former master, it is only Isaac Oliver who leaves a body of recognised and recognisable work. As Otto Kurz stated in his article of 1957, 'a number of elusive or shadowy personalities remain. One of them is Rowland Locky (sic)'.5 As was the case of his former master, Lockey was making a living outside the sphere of limning.[6]Lockey is also noted as an independent artist in contemporary literature – his name appears in Richard Haydocke's preface to A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintinge, Carvinge & Buildinge (1598); he is also mentioned by Francis Meres, in his Palladis tamia (1598), among the eminent artists then living in England, and in Edward Norgate's Miniatura (1627-28), as using a third technique of crayons, or 'dry colours'.7 The antiquary William Burton calls him Hilliard's 'expert scholler…who was both skilful in limning and in oil-works and perspectives'.[8]

By 1589 it is likely that Lockey was a freeman of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths and in 1600, his brother Nicholas joined Hilliard as an apprentice.[9] In the exhibition Artists of the Tudor Court (1983), the curator Roy Strong attempted to assemble his oeuvre.[10] The written plaudits afforded to Lockey by his contemporaries have not been matched by documented portrait miniatures, but Strong used as his basis the More series and an oil of Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby, of 1598, inscribed 'Rolandus Lockey pinxit Londini'.[11] He also compared a miniature of an unknown noblewoman by Hilliard and a contemporary copy of the same subject; the latter he attributed to Lockey. [12] However, unlike the work of Laurence Hilliard (1582-1648), there are simply no signed works with which to compare those mysterious, non-Hilliard miniatures of the later 16th century.[13]

Although Lockey clearly made a living through his oil copies, he was fully trained to paint ad vivum miniatures. As Strong pointed out, the presumed sitter of the present miniature is of the type of aristocratic rank who appears to have employed Lockey, as he is recorded as working for both Elizabeth ('Bess') of Hardwick. Anne Cobham married Walter Haddon (c. 1514-1571) but had no children, and secondly Sir Henry Cobham (1538- 1591/2), with whom she had three children.

[1] Lockey's signed and dated, visual family tree of the More family of 1593 is one of the most important paintings by him (National Portrait Gallery, NPG 2765).

A cabinet miniature copy of this oil painting, dated slightly later, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum; a further oil version is at Nostell Priory (West Yorkshire).

[2] This information was first given by Edmond, M, Hilliard & Oliver: The Lives and Works of Two Great Miniaturists, (London: Robert Hale, 1983), p. 72, where she quotes the 1588 will of Dutch

student Pieter Mathewe which referred to 'my twoe fellowes Isac Olivyer and Rouland Lacq'.

[3] P. Norman, ed., 'Nicholas Hilliard's Treatise concerning 'The Arte of Limning', with Introduction and Notes by Philip Norman, LL.D.," The Walpole Society 1 (1911-12), p. 41.

[4] Goldring, E, Nicholas Hilliard: Life of an Artist (London: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 181.

[5]Kurz, O, 'Rowland Locky', The Burlington Magazine, Vol. 99, (1957), no. 646, p. 12.

[6] Elizabeth Goldring notes that at the time of Lockey's apprenticeship: 'Hilliard and his workshop produced not just miniatures but paintings in great (portraits as well as 'story work'), seals, medals, illuminations, designs for prints and miscellaneous decorative painting', see; Goldring, (2019) Hilliard, p. 170. Lockey was also responsible for designing title-page borders for the Bishop's Bible in 1602 – evidence that he was supplementing his income outside of painting oils or miniatures.

[7] Burnette, A. (2010). 'Lockey, Rowland (c. 1566-1616), painter and goldsmith', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [online] Available at: https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-97801986 14128-e-16897 [accessed 9 Feb 2021]. This technique presumably refers to the type of drawing in chalks used by Holbein and later at the French court by Jean Clouet and others. In France they were often preliminary life drawings for miniatures or oils.

[8] Murdoch, J The English miniature, (London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 60.

[9]The exact date is unknown but it was certainly after 1589 and no later than the summer of 1592, as by then Lockey was employing an apprentice of his own.

[10] Strong, R. and Murrell, V.J, Artists of the Tudor court: the portrait miniature rediscovered, 1520–1620. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1983).

[11] The Mater and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge. This painting is a copy of an earlier work.

[12] Strong and Murrell, p. 94.

[13] Miniature of an unknown lady by Nicholas Hilliard, collection of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry KT and second version in the National Museum, Stockholm (NMB 1694).

Exhibitions

Victoria and Albert Museum, Artists of the Tudor Court, (London, 1983), no. 124 (as an Unknown Lady, attributed to Roland Lockey).

Literature:

Strong, R. (1983) The English Renaissance Miniature, London: Thames & Hudson. Illustrated p. 139 (as an Unknown Lady by Rowland Lockey) and p. 140.