THE LIMNER COMPANY



DAVID DES GRANGES (c.1611 - c.1672)

Portrait miniature of King Charles II (1630-1685), wearing a decorated doublet under an armour breastplate and the blue sash of the Order of the Garter

Circa: Circa 1651

Circa 1651

Oval, 5.1 cm (2 inches) high

Watercolour on vellum

This portrait of King Charles II by David Des Granges likely forms part of an official series commissioned by the twenty-year-old King whilst he was in exile. Des Granges began painting Charles when he was a boy, originally copying portraits of Charles after John Hoskins in the late 1630s. After Charles' father, King Charles I, was notoriously executed in 1649, the young Charles was proclaimed the rightful King by the Scottish Parliament. In January 1651, he was crowned 'King of Scots', as his father had been, despite a highly fraught relationship with the Parliament. David Des Granges accompanied Charles on this trip to Scotland and was appointed 'His Majesty's Limner in Scotland' in the same year. This is known through Des Granges' recordings of the portraits he painted of Charles for the Treasury Papers, requesting payment for miniatures in 'A Schedule of Work done by David de Grange Intertained Limner to His Majty during Y or Royal abode at St.Johnstons at Scotland'. Despite his Scottish coronation and proclamation, Charles' army was defeated at Worcester in 1651 following a final attempt to invade England, and Charles fled the country in secret to the Louvre in Paris, France.

During Charles' exile, many portrait miniatures were painted of the King to distribute amongst his supporters, not only as tokens of affection, but to deliberately ensure that the likeness of the King kept circulating prominently to garner and encourage supporters. Given the size of portrait miniatures, they could be secretly given and kept, with their protective features enhanced by their encasement in lockets and closed-cases. Des Granges produced many miniatures of Charles II, often copied from full-scale portraits of the King including by Adriaen Hanneman and Philippe de Champaigne (whose portrait may have provided inspiration for Des Granges to include the tassels on Charles' collar in the above portrait), to encourage continued loyalty to the monarchy, but also to provide much-needed fiscal security for the royal family. The importance of portrait miniatures extended into the process of restoring

the crown after Oliver Cromwell's death in 1660.

Des Granges painted numerous 'types' of miniatures of the King, which are listed by Gibson in her thesis on the iconography of Charles. The present miniature falls into his 'own' type, another example of which can be found at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford[1]. In her thesis on the iconography of the King, Gibson lists ten versions of this miniature, including this particular example. They all feature a 'wispy moustache', 'single straggling lock on one temple'[2], and the distinctive tassels that hang from his collar. It has a rather interesting provenance, given that in the past it was believed to be a portrait of Sir Charles Lucas (1613-1648), by Richard Gibson (1615-1690). When it was exhibited in Brussels in 1912, the miniature was given this identification. The first re-attribution to des Granges appears to have been in 1916, when the miniature was listed as a version of another portrait by the artist in the Portland Collection at Welbeck Abbey[3]. Since then, it has gone through the collection of Arbury Hall, Warwickshire, before appearing on the European art market. Now, the attribution to des Granges can be made with confidence, given the handling of the portrait and similarity to other miniatures painted by the artist of this type.

[1] David Des Granges (1611-1672), Portrait of Charles II; 1650, Watercolour on vellum, 7.2 x 5.9 cm, signed and dated D.G. 1650 (Western Art, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

[2] K. Gibson, "Best belov'd of Kings": The Iconography of King Charles II, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1997, p. 292, no. 271.

[3] R. W. Goulding, 'The Welbeck Abbey Miniatures belonging to His Grace, the Duke of Portland: a catalogue raisonnée', Walpole Society, 4 (1916), p.101, under no. 89, 'e'.

Exhibitions

Brussels, 1912, Exposition de la Miniature, no. 164 (as Sir Charles Lucas by Richard Gibson, lent by Messrs. Duveen).

Literature:

J. J Foster, Samuel Cooper & The English Miniature Painters of the XVII Century, Dickinsons, London, 1914, supplement, p. 119, no. 17 (as Sir Charles Lucus, by Richard Gibson, owned by Messrs. Duveen).

R. W. Goulding, 'The Welbeck Abbey Miniatures belonging to His Grace, the Duke of Portland: a catalogue raisonnée', Walpole Society, vol. 4, 1916, p.101, under no. 89, 'e'.

K. Gibson, "Best belov'd of Kings": The Iconography of King Charles II, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1997, vol. 2, p. 292, no. 271.