

THE LIMNER COMPANY



FRENCH SCHOOL (18th century)

Portrait miniature of Queen Marie Antoinette, profile to the left, wearing classical style dress, her hair powdered and styled with a veil; circa 1795

Circa: Circa 1795

Circa 1795

Watercolour on ivory (licence number: 75S8EAH2)

Set into a seed pearl mount and later gold ring setting (early 19th century); later leather ring case

Oval, 12mm (1/2 in) high

Ring size US 4/ UK I

Marie Antoinette was extremely fond of rings – and as the ultimate style setter she began a craze for portrait rings. She certainly owned at least one of herself in profile, as Princess Marie Anne de Bourbon Parme mentions in her inventory:

"Une grande bague avec miniature et diamants. Miniature de la Reine Marie Antoinette, d'après le testament de la Duchesse d'Angoulême, Comtesse de Marnes (...).

Les trois bagues proviennent de la Reine Marie Antoinette et ont été léguées par sa fille, Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême, Comtesse de Marnes, à sa nièce et fille adoptive Louise de France, Duchesse de Parme, qui les a laissées à son fils Robert I Duc de Parme".

[A large ring with a miniature and diamonds. Miniature of Queen Marie Antoinette, according to the will of the Duchesse d'Angoulême, Comtesse de Marnes (...).]

These three rings came from Queen Marie Antoinette and were given by her daughter, Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême, Comtesse de Marnes, to her niece and adoptive daughter Louise de France, Duchesse de Parme, who then gave them to her son Robert I Duc de Parme.] They were sold at Sotheby's Geneva on 14 November 2018, the profile ring for £235,000 ([fig.1](#)).

It is likely that the profile portrait in the current ring came from a print, such as that in the Musée Carnavalet in Paris ([see fig.2](#)). This type of profile portrait satisfied the interest in Neoclassical style portraiture and clothing in the later 18th century (note the Roman style clasp on the Queen's cloak in the ring). This ring may have found its way to England hidden on a fleeing noblewoman or supporter of the royal family, leaving France before the possibility of imprisonment and possible execution. Marie Antoinette herself preserved what she could before her imprisonment, wrapping diamonds, rubies and pearls in cotton, and placing them in a wooden box to be sent to Brussels which was under the rule of the queen's sister, Archduchess Marie-Christine.