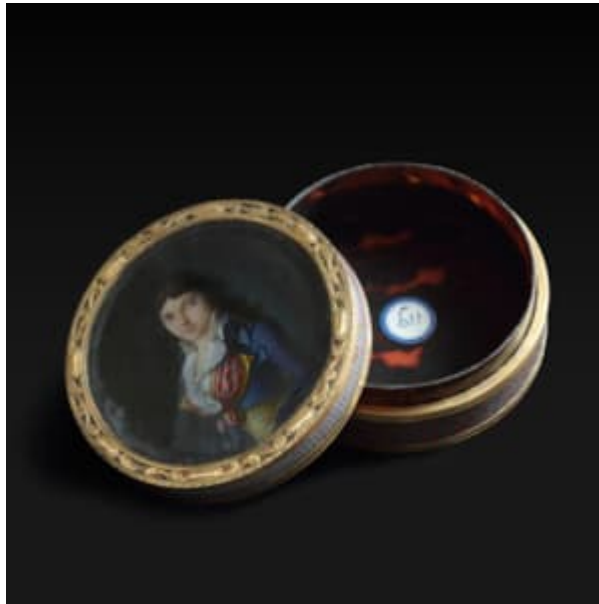


THE LIMNER COMPANY



FRENCH SCHOOL (18th century)

Portrait miniature of a Young Lady in a blue redingote and yellow waistcoat, with flounced collar and striped cravat

Circa: Circa 1790s

Circa 1790s

Watercolour on ivory (licence number: 2SUQVHNB)

Set into a vari-coloured snuff box with gold decoration and tortoiseshell interior.

Circular, 62mm diameter.

Depicting an unknown French Revolutionary, this portrait provides an insight into discussions about and changes in gender stereotypes during the final decade of the eighteenth century. The sitter's outfit is strikingly masculine, though it retains a more feminine style through the tight silhouette and open front.

As with her clothes, this woman's hair is also rather masculine, and at the front is styled almost as a 'titus cut', popular at the turn of the nineteenth century. However, her hair remains long at the back and curls over her left shoulder.

Women throughout Western Europe in the late eighteenth century began to adopt jackets like that worn in this portrait, known as redingotes. These were inspired by the riding coats worn by their male contemporaries, and often featured wide collars and lapels. As is the case here, these were worn over corsets and with a separate skirt, and the jacket itself featured a skirt, but only on the reverse of the garment. In this portrait, the sitter's bust is adorned with a light, flounced collar and a cravat. This cravat is the only decorated or patterned item within her outfit, and it is possible that it was included to ensure that she was wearing all the colours of the tricolore. Doing so was important as one could be accused of not supporting the revolutionary cause if this visual display of loyalty was not apparent.

There are other key examples of women wearing these styles. Interestingly, one of these comes from a portrait, not of a revolutionary, but of Marie Antoinette herself. A portrait of the queen, seated in front of

the temple de l'amour¹, by Jean-Baptiste-André Gautier-Dagoty (1740-1786), presents her in a light blue redingote. However, in this portrait, it seems that the jacket is being worn for its actual purpose- Marie is also holding a pair of gloves and a cane.

For Théroigne de Méricourt, the adoption of male style was more political than practical, as would have been the case with the sitter of the present work. In 1789, Méricourt is believed to have led part of the March of the Poissardes to Versailles from Paris. As hearsay goes, she rode on a jet black horse, wearing a plumed hat, a blood red redingote, and a sabre. As in this portrait, she was styling men's clothing to make a political statement. In later years, Méricourt came to be known as an 'Amazon'- a reference to the ancient female warriors. By the time this portrait was painted, Méricourt had been declared insane and sent to an asylum. She remained there until her death in 1817.

1. Built in Petit Trianon, at Versailles, built by Richard Mique for Marie Antoinette.