

THE LIMNER COMPANY



THOMAS FLATMAN (1635 - 1688)

King Charles II ((1630-1685), wearing armour, lawn collar and blue sash of the garter, sky background

Circa: circa 1661

circa 1661

Framed: 8 x 6.5 cm (3 ¹/₈ x 2 ¹/₂ inches)

Watercolour on vellum

The present portrait of the king appears to have been based on Cooper's 1661 portrait of the monarch.

Cooper, the pre-eminent artist of the 17th century, appears to have signed and dated only singular versions of any one of his portraits. Although many miniatures are attributed to him, it is likely that only the unique images bearing a signature can be fully accepted as his work. We do know, however, thanks to a surviving copy of Cooper's self-portrait by Thomas Flatman, that the latter artist had access to Cooper's works in his studio. This portrait aligns strongly to Flatman's technique, which was harder and more graphic than Cooper's, the bright blue in the sky consistent with his extant works.

The 1661 portrait by Cooper has a possible provenance stemming from Nell Gwyn's illegitimate son with Charles II who was given the title of the Duke of St Albans by the king (Gwyn forced his hand after dangling their baby son over some bannisters). It was clearly an important and popular image, as many versions exist (listed in the appendix below). Like the sketch of Cromwell by Cooper, it seems that his miniature of the King was copied by oil painters. The Dutch artist Pieter Nason (1612-1688/90) and his followers seem to have produced variants based on the miniature and a number of other miniaturists did the same.