THE LIMNER COMPANY



ENGLISH SCHOOL (17th/18th century)

Portrait enamel of a Gentleman wearing armour and lawn jabot

Enamel on metal

Oval, 54 mm (2 ⅛ in) high

The blue counter enamel with (later/ erroneous inscription ‘General Lambert/ anno 1659’)

17th-century silver filigree frame

The present enamel has always been the subject of some debate. While it does not accord to the known enamels of the 17th century – in particular the tiny, brightly coloured enamels of Petitot father and son – watchmakers were employing enamellers of some skill to produce watchcases which demonstrated that Petitot’s output was far from the only source for technique in this period. For example, the family workshop of Pierre (I) Huaud (1612 - around 1680) produced some outstanding examples of painted enamels, including watch cases. Pierre Huaud (I) was the founder of the dynasty of renowned enamellers, including three of his children: Pierre II (1647-1698), Jean-Pierre (1655-1723) and Ami (1657-1724). The three brothers trained in the workshop of their father and apparently did not sign their work until his death around 1680[1]. Although enamellers of this date were usually French or Swiss-born, this did not mean that their subjects were also always from those countries, as evidenced by Henri Toutin’s (1614–1684) portrait of King Charles I (1600–1649) of England[2].

The current enamel has no known connections to any other portrait in a different media (eg no oil or engraving can be found which connects to this image), yet the sitter in the portrait has distinctive features. The inscription on the counter enamel appears to be something of a red herring, as extant portraits of General Lambert do not correspond with the sitter’s features in this image[3].

Despite the date of 1659 being added to the counter enamel, the fashion of the sitter’s hair and plain

lawn jabot points closer to a date in the mid-1670s. The heavy, long wig belongs to this period, when Charles II had successfully ruled for fifteen years and had another decade to go. One sitter, whose features accord with the man in this portrait, is Henry Brouncker, third Viscount Brouncker of Lyons (c. 1627–1688), cofferer to Charles II and gentleman of the bedchamber to the duke of York.

Henry was created MD on 23 June 1646, took part in the siege of Colchester in 1648, served as the MP for Romney from 1665 to 1668, and was a commissioner of trade and plantation in 1673. According to charges brought against him in the House of Commons in 1668, he ordered the sails of the British fleet to be slackened in the duke of York's name during the battle of Lowestoft in 1664, thereby allowing the Dutch to escape. As a result of the incident, he was dismissed from the duke's service and expelled from parliament. He was not well liked, although admired for his skill with chess: Edward, earl of Clarendon, described him as 'a man throughout his whole life notorious for nothing but the highest degree of impudence, stooping to the most infamous offices, and playing chess very well, which preferred him more than the most virtuous qualities could have done' (Clarendon, 2.515).

In May 1661, he married Rebecca Rodway, widow of Thomas Jermyn, brother to the earl of St Albans; they had no children, and with his death, on 4 January 1688 at Sheen Abbey, Surrey, the viscountcy and the barony became extinct. He was buried at Richmond, Surrey.

[1] The three brothers trained in the workshop of their father and apparently did not sign their work until his death around 1680. The earliest enamelled watchcases probably originated in Blois, a French city.

[2] Now in the Mauritshuis Royal Art Gallery in The Hague.

[3] The most well-known being that painted after Robert Walker in the National Portrait Gallery, NPG252. The original after which this portrait was painted is unlocated.

Literature:

E. Rutherford and B. Grosvenor, Secret Faces: An Exhibition of Unseen Portrait Miniatures from Public & Private Collections, Exhibition Catalogue, Philip Mould & Company, 2008, p. 85, fig. 13.