THE LIMNER COMPANY



CHRISTIAN RICHTER (1678 - 1732)

Portrait miniature of a Lady, seated in front of a column with landscape behind, wearing blue sink dress with white sleeves and collar, red cloak, holding a dove in her right arm

Circa: circa 1705

circa 1705

Watercolour and bodycolour on vellum

Rectangular, 78mm (3 1/16in) high

Original gilt-metal hinged case, the fish skin covers with silver stud detailing

The rectangular format of this portrait is rather unique in the *oeuvre* of Christian Richter, a Swedish-born miniature painter who worked both there and in England, where he relocated in 1702. It is entirely possible that the format is a result of the portrait being a copy of a work by one of the great oil painters of the day, for example Lely, Dahl, or Kneller, whose portraits Richter is known to have copied.

Compositionally, the work is very similar to the half-length portraits of women painted by these artists, though it has not been possible to trace an original after which this portrait could have been copied. It was said by George Vertue that Richter experienced 'venereal distemper' later in his life, and was disfigured, meaning he took in-person sittings less often, presumably as it was not a pleasant experience to be sat in front of him. From this, his practice of copying the works of other artists emerged, as there was no possibility of offending a sitter through this process. Richter's use of highly saturated colour allows for a sumptuous feel to the sitter's dress, much in the tradition of portraiture in the period. Perhaps most striking is the dove that is perched in the crease of the lady's right elbow, possibly a symbol of peace or purity.

Exhibitions

Edinburgh, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, *Portrait Miniatures from the Merchiston Collection*, 23rd September - 11 December 2005.

Literature:

S. Lloyd, *Portrait Miniatures from the Merchiston Collection*, 2005, pp. 24-25 and 57, illustrated in colour pl.5.