THE LIMNER COMPANY



Circle of SOFONISBA ANGUISSOLA (c. 1532 - 1625)

A Lady, wearing mauve gown with high, wide collar, burgundy underdress, pearls and sunburst necklace

Circa: late 16th or early 17th century

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Oil on copper

Oval, 85 mm. (3 ⅜ in.) high

Datable to the end of the 16th or early 17th century, this work is reminiscent of the small portraits painted on copper by the Cremonese artist Sofonisba Anguissola (c.1532–1625). In her lifetime, Anguissola was something of a celebrity, admired by Michelangelo (1475-1564) and Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), but over time her paintings were misattributed to El Greco and Titian. New research has uncovered 50 known works in her *oeuvre*.

Anguissola was born to a noble northern Italian family and, together with her six siblings, received a comprehensive humanistic education and training in the art of painting. Her fame as a painter quickly spread, not only in Italy but across Europe, and in 1559 she was invited to Spain to serve as a lady-in-waiting to the queen. While in Spain, she painted many portraits of the royal family and other members of court. She spent more than a decade in Madrid before marrying a Sicilian nobleman and returning to Italy.

In spite of its size, every detail is minutely executed, in this small oil – with particular attention given to character in the sitter's expression. The high collar is typical of dress worn by women in Bologna in the 16th century and close to that worn by Anguissola herself in her own self-portraits dating from the mid 16th century. Small, oil on copper cabinet pictures of this type were produced widely across the north of Italy as gifts or presentation pieces for potential patrons. The use of copper made them easy to

transport and exhibit, as well as instilling them with a precious, gem-like quality.