THE LIMNER COMPANY



CONTINENTAL SCHOOL (17th century)

Portrait miniature of an Officer, wearing gilt-studded armour, a sash and lace-edged lawn collar with tassels

Circa: circa 1650

circa 1650

Watercolour and bodycolour on vellum

Oval, 60 mm (2 3/8 in.) high

Silver-gilt frame with scrolled cresting

This 17th century soldier has been painted by an artist working in Europe. It has not been possible to identify the artist – or their nationality – partially due to the fact that artists were relatively peripatetic at this date. Civil War in England had displaced many – with satellites of artistic production of portrait miniatures springing up in various European cities.

Alexander Cooper (1609-1660), brother of Samuel, was partly responsible for bringing English portrait miniature techniques to the Northern Courts of Europe in The Hague, but also in Sweden and Denmark. His influence can be seen here, particularly in the brownish palette – but the careful depiction of the sitter's lace perhaps belongs to an earlier era.

It is possible that this soldier was one of the battle-hardened veterans of the Thirty Years' War. He may have been part of the highly disciplined, professional Imperial Army, which, following the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, were engaged in the logistical, often tense, process of withdrawing from occupied regions like Moravia, with notable departures occurring around July 1650. The sash he wears, which might once have been a bright hue, By 1650 sashes were primarily used to distinguish sides on the battlefield before standardized uniforms were common. For example, in the English Civil War, Parliamentarian forces often wore orange or tawny sashes, while Royalist forces wore red.