THE LIMNER COMPANY



POLISH SCHOOL (18th century)

Portrait of a Polish Noblewoman, wearing blue dress with gold embroidery and lace trim, a red cloak, her hair powdered

Circa: circa 1730s

circa 1730s

Oil on copper

Oval, 82 mm (3 1/4 in) high

Silver frame with scroll surmount

The identification of this portrait as of a Polish subject, and as by a Polish artist, comes from a comparison with other known portraits of members of the Polish court from the 1730s. Important artists working at the court at the time included Louis de Silvestre (1676-1760), who was employed by Augustus II (1670-1733). Though the sitter is not likely to be royal, as she wears very little decoration or jewellery, which was typically worn by members of the royal family, the woman here bears a great resemblance to many painted by Silvestre.

In the 1730s, Poland was ruled under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which began in 1659 and ended in 1795. Augustus II, known as August the Strong, was King between 1697 and 1706, and 1709 and 1733. The short gap in his reign was due to a defeat by Charles XII of Sweden, and Augustus returned to the throne in Poland under Russian auspices. He was known for his extravagant patronage of the arts and for the myth that he had over 300 illegitimate children. Upon his death, the War of Polish Succession broke out, and eventually Augustus III of Poland succeeded to the throne in 1733. This portrait, therefore, was painted at a time of great political change.