THE LIMNER COMPANY



Portrait miniature of Madame Henry Ochsenbein (née Flore Petronille Robert), wearing sleeveless green dress with white underdress, coral studded gold comb in her upswept curled dark hair

Circa: 1812

Watercolour on ivory (licence W2VEEBB8)

Oval, 75 mm (2 15/16 in) high

Signed and dated 'Fontallard 1812' lower left

Gilt-metal mount within rectangular ebonized wood frame, the reverse inscribed witth sitter's biographical details

Portrait miniatures by the French miniaturist Fontallard are rare – and as Leo Schidlof notes in his seminal dictionary of European Miniatures (1964) bear a resemblance to the works of his master Jean-Baptiste Jacques Augustin (1759-1832) The carefully observed fabric of Madame Ochsenbein's gown shows the tactile variation between the heavy green velvet and sheer white sleeves of her Empire line dress.

Although it has not been possible to identify Madame Ochsenbein – who was born in the Robert family as Flore Petronille – the surname is associated with Swiss families. Perhaps most famously Ulrich Ochsenbein (1811-1890), who created The Swiss Constitution and headed it along with others to form the Swiss Federal Government (to which he was elected in 1848).

Painted in 1812, the present work was created in the same year as Fontallard was awarded a 1st class medal at the Salon in Paris for the portrait of his son aged 15.