THE LIMNER COMPANY



ANTOINE VESTIER (1740 - 1824)

Portrait miniature of a Young Lady full face in white silk dress with riple frilled collar, pink bow at corsage, large hat adorned with pink roses, foliage and white ribbon in her powdered upswept hair

Circa: 1783

1783

Watercolour on ivory (licence FS9EPKJF)

Circular, 54mm (2 $^{1}/_{8}$ in) diam.

Signed and dated 'Vestier 1783' (lower right)

Gold frame, the reverse with foliate monogram 'LH' on pink ground

Within the timeline of Vestier's artistic career, this miniature was painted early on, before he became either a member of the Academie Royale or made his premier exhibit at the Salon du Louvre in 1785. A few years later, in 1788, he would become painter to the King. Vestier was talented in both the miniature and full-scale form, and his portraits of female sitters often feature similar features to the present work: floral accessories, soft whites and pastel colours, and elegant poses.

1783 was the year in which Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun's portrait of *Marie Antoniette in a Chemise Dress* was exhibited at the Paris Salon. The portrait was deemed scandalous for the outfit that the Dauphine was wearing, not unlike that worn by the unknown lady in this portrait, and Le Brun quickly replaced the portrait with a more 'proper' version, in which Marie Antoniette was instead wearing a *robe à la française*. Though it is not known whether Vestier painted the current work before or after this scandal, either way, it is an example of the influence the young Dauphine exerted on the fashions adopted by women in France in this period.

The muted colours of this woman’s dress and hat allow emphasis to be placed on the colourful bow on her bodice and flowers in her hair. Again, these bright accessories, especially flowers, were popular additions to portraiture, and could be used to symbolise specific attributes in their wearers. This lady appears to have a rose atop her hat, which was typically a symbol for love. Such a meaning is fitting for a portrait miniature, which may have been presented to a love interest, or husband.

On the reverse of the miniature is a rather unique and highly detailed monogram, which has been painted rather than added in hairwork or gold decoration, these being more typically used to embellish the reverse of miniatures.

Literature:

A.-M. Passez, Antoine Vestier 1740-1824, Paris 1989, pp. 290, 292, No 198, illustrated p. 291 (described as 'Le très aristocratique modèle de Vestier […] L'importante capeline ornée de rubans et de roses donne une certaine originalité au portrait.')