THE LIMNER COMPANY



IGNAZIO PIO VITTORIANO CAMPANA (1744 - 1786)

Portrait miniature of a Lady, wearing white dress with blue ribbon around her waist and cuffs, fichu scarf tied around her shoulders and a posy pinned to her corsage, hair worn curled and powdered, resting her left arm on a table with a basket of flowers

Circa: circa 1783

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Watercolour on ivory (licence M25US1AQ)

Circular, 76 mm (3 in) diameter

Gilt metal stamped frame

Campana's miniatures are rarely signed, but are distinguished by his elegant female sitters, often surrounded by flowers and seated in a similar position to the woman painted here, with her arm gently resting on the table beside her. The identity of the woman in this portrait is unknown, but it is possible that she was a member of the court of Marie Antoinette (1755-1793), of whom Campana was an official painter. He had moved to Paris following his marriage to Maria Christiana Vagliengo (1756-1811) in 1773 and established his career there. His wife was also a miniature painter, working in a similar style to her husband, and she forged her own path, allegedly becoming a teacher to Hortense de Beauharnais (1783-1837).

The established styles of Marie Antoinette's court are clear in this portrait; the 'simple' white dress that the sitter wears resembles that worn by the Dauphine in Vigée Le Brun's controversial portrait of her, exhibited at the salon in 1783. The same can be said about her hair, which has been painted using a remarkable stippling technique to achieve a 'fluffy' texture, defined in places with fine brush strokes to demark singular hairs. Campana's women often look similar, and this is largely explained by the importance that women in the Queen's court placed on fitting in visually. Bright, thick paint has been used to add flowers to the scene, including peonies and forget-me-nots. Both flowers are symbolic of love, and may have been added purposefully if this miniature was painted for a love interest.

Exhibitions

Paris, Galerie Marigny, *Miniatures du XVIe au XIXe siècle*, 1985, no 72, illustrated p.19, pl. V.