THE LIMNER COMPANY



PETER CROSS (c.1645 - 1724)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman, wearing a dark coat with blue silk cloak, lace jabot, with a dark brown curled wig

Circa: 1682

1682

Watercolour on vellum laid down on card

Oval, 79 mm (3 $^{1}/_{8}$ in) high

Signed with gold monogram 'PC' (mid-left) and signed and dated in full on the reverse 'Duke/of/Monmouth/[…]/3 of August 1682/P Cr[..]s fecit'

Silver-gilt frame with spiral cresting, the reverse engraved with the erroneous identification of sitter 'Duke of Monmouth'

Numerous miniatures by Cross have been identified as James Scott, Duke of Monmouth (1649-1685), an illegitimate son of Charles II (1630-1685) and Lucy Walter (d.1658), who became the first and only Duke of Monmouth. He had a military career and was able to gain popularity within the court, supported by his father. Upon the death of Charles II and the succession of James II, Monmouth had developed a plot to instate himself as King, but this did not succeed, and he was captured and executed on Tower Hill at the orders of his uncle.

Visual comparisons with known portraits of the Duke confirm that this is not the same gentleman, and this identification was likely added at a later date as the sitter here is young - and handsome - as Monmouth was known to be. Nevertheless, this portrait is a superbly preserved example of the work of Peter Cross, and instead depicts an unknown gentleman alive at the same time as Monmouth, though likely to have been born at a later date. The combination of the short lace jabot and long curled hair worn by this gentleman allow the miniature to be dated to the 1680s.

In 1678, Cross had become the ‘Lymner in Ordinary’ to Charles II; a role he had therefore acquired by the time the present work was painted. The confusion about his first name was heightened by George Vertue’s (1684-1756) account of meeting Cross before his death in 1724, at which time he heard stories about the artistic network of miniaturists working at the same time as him, including Samuel Cooper. He is known for his use of a stippling technique in the skin of his sitters, which deviated from the earlier use of thin brush strokes, and is evident in this particular work.