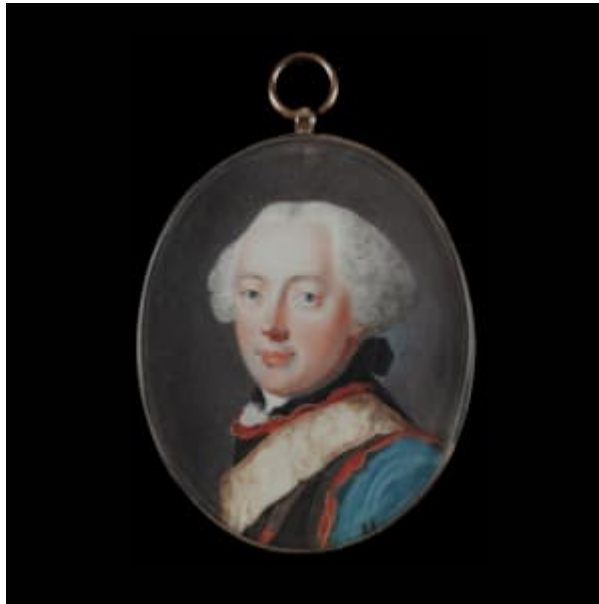


THE LIMNER COMPANY



Circle of JEAN-ETIENNE LIOTARD (1702 - 1789)

Portrait miniature, probably portraying a young Frederick the Great, wearing the sash of the Order of the Schwarzen Adler, over an armour breastplate and blue velvet jacket, black solitaire ribbon in his powdered hair;

Circa: circa 1745

Watercolour on vellum, pasted onto a playing card (red diamond)

This fascinating miniature, painted on vellum and backed with a playing card, shows a connection with Antoine Pesne's (1683–1757) portrait of Frederick the Great, as Crown Prince, painted at his residence, Rheinsberg Palace in 1739/40^[2]. Captured before he earned his moniker 'the Great', this oil portrait shows the Prince brimming with youthful ambition, tempered by intellect and sensitivity.

The Order of the Schwarzen Adler (or Black Eagle), was founded in January, 1701, by Elector Friedrich III of Brandenburg, who became King Friedrich I in Prussia the next day. The silk moiré sash was a bright orange colour, worn from the left shoulder to the right hip, which in this miniature has faded to a pale pink. It was the highest order of chivalry in Prussia and was limited to nobility. The sitter in this portrait is youthful, suggesting that, if not of Frederick himself, was a member of a princely family.^[3]

Although it would be sensible to suggest that this image, possibly of the future king, might have been painted by one of Pesne's most talented pupils, Anton Friedrich König (1722-1787), the technique shows a much closer relationship with the work of Jean-Etienne Liotard (1702-1789). By 1740, Liotard was living in Constantinople but Upon leaving the Levant in 1742, the artist travelled through Moldavia before establishing himself at the Habsburg Imperial Court in Vienna under Empress Maria Theresa.

A miniaturist working in Austria may have been aware of Liotard's growing reputation and fame during the 1740s. Liotard was a tireless self-promoter. He combined his highly eclectic and eccentric personal style – the self-fashioned 'Turkish Painter' – with a genius eye for detail. His personal and professional

fame made him one of the most sought-after and highest-paid portraitists of the Enlightenment. An intriguing possibility is that this portrait was copied from a now lost portrait by Liotard from his time in Austria.

[2] We would like to thank Neil Jeffares for his suggestion of the sitter as Frederick the Great (email communication, January 2026).

[3] There were 64 promotions awarded by Friedrich II from 1740 to 1749, the period in which this portrait was likely commissioned.