

THE LIMNER COMPANY



BRITISH SCHOOL

Portrait miniature of a Pug reclining on a red silk cushion

Circa: circa 1740

circa 1740

Watercolour on ivory (licence PU35CN95)

Rectangular, 45 mm x 40 mm (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in)

Dark wood frame with inner gilded border

This portrait of a pug dog is extremely rare within the *oeuvre* of miniature painting. Reclining but posed on a red silk cushion, with no collar to identify the name of dog nor owner, this must have been a well-loved and extremely pampered pet.

The dog's breed, while recognisable to the modern eye, has distinct features which identify it as from the first half of the 18th century. The cropped ears for example, and uncurled tail, are found on pugs of this date.

Royal owners of pugs from this date include Frederik I (1676-1751) and Ulrika Eleonora (16488-1741) owned pugs and made them fashionable in Europe. Artists were commissioned to paint these favoured animals which clearly shows the deep affection that their owners felt - Francisco Goya (1748-1828), Christophe Huet II (1700-1759) and David Kock (1675-1744) all produced paintings where the primary subject was the pug. Most famously in England is the self-portrait of William Hogarth (1697-1764) with his beloved pug Trump, datable to 1745.

Trump was not Hogarth's first pug; in December 1730, he placed an advert in *The Craftsman*, offering a reward of half a guinea for the return of 'a light colour'd Dutch DOG, with a black Muzzle', named 'Pugg'.

He probably acquired Trump soon after this, in the early 1730s. Generally known as Dutch dogs, or Dutch mastiffs, pugs were closely associated with the Netherlands; Trump's name, shared with many other pugs, was an anglicisation of Tromp, the name of two famous Dutch admirals of the 17th century.

With his gangly legs and long muzzle, Trump's appearance is quite different to that of today's pugs. He was the product of an age before dog shows and breed standards, when pugs came in a wider variety of shapes. What was unusual was Hogarth's love for a dog associated with royalty and nobility – his choice of canine companion at odds with Hogarth's self-made image of the honest artisan.

It is clear that by choosing the medium of a portrait miniature for their dog's portrait, the owner of the present work felt strongly that this pug deserved an image of the most intimate type, associated with love and not status.