THE LIMNER COMPANY

NATHANIEL HONE (1718 - 1784)

Portrait enamel of a Lady, wearing purple dress with pearls, white lace border and pearls in her hair

Circa: 1767

1767

Enamel on copper

Oval, 40mm (1.57 inches) high

Signed with monogram and dated ‘NH/ 1767’

Gold plated frame with reeded edge

The year that the present work was painted - 1767 - marks a high point in the career of Nathaniel Hone. Hone had painted a famous portrait of Catherine Maria "Kitty" Fisher (1741–1767) during 1765, but her sudden and tragic death in 1767 from smallpox, just months after her marriage, gave this portrait new resonance for the public. This was also the year he completed an acclaimed oil-on-canvas portrait of the famous English actor and playwright David Garrick.[1]

In 1766, he painted the Italian soprano Anna Zamperini (c.1745-1771), who created a sensation in London, in the role of Cecchina in N. Piccinni's opera La Buona Figliuola.

During this time, Hone was highly active as an artist transitioning from miniatures to life-size oils, and he served as a director of the Society of Artists in 1766 before helping establish the Royal Academy a year later, becoming a founder member in 1768.

A Dublin-born portrait painter, miniaturist and engraver, he moved to England as a youth and worked as

a travelling portrait painter. In 1742 he married the wealthy Mary Earle in York Minster. The couple moved to London where Hone established himself painting portraits and narrative scenes, venturing into the difficult medium of enamel where he showed much talent. Although the sitter in the present portrait is unknown, she is clearly associating herself with the fashionable celebrity scene of the 1760s that Hone was so central in fashioning.

[1] Previously with Philip Mould & Co.