

# THE LIMNER COMPANY



**SAMUEL COOPER (1607/8 - 1672)**

**Portrait miniature of a Gentleman wearing a black cap, black doublet, white lawn collar**

Circa: circa 1655

circa 1655

*Watercolour on vellum*

Oval, 28mm (1 1/8 in) high

This portrait miniature was painted when Samuel Cooper was at the height of his artistic powers. It was during the 1650s that he produced what would become the definitive portrait of Oliver Cromwell,[1] considered the masterpiece of Cooper's career.

Art historians marvel at Cooper's evident diplomatic - as well as artistic - skill. Cooper had cut his teeth in the studio of his uncle, John Hoskins the Elder (c.1590-1665), who worked at the court of King Charles I, and Cooper's independent works of the 1630s included portraits of courtiers. In the bloody decade that followed, Cooper produced portraits of prominent figures on both sides of the English Civil War, and Cromwell clearly had no qualms commissioning him. Similarly, when the Restoration of the monarchy came in 1660, Charles II sat to Cooper within days of landing on English shores.

The present miniature dates to the Interregnum. The sitter is likely a scholarly or professional gentleman, indicated by the black cap he wears. While not exclusively worn by working men,[2] in the mid-17th century, black caps such as this are mostly found in portraits of men of law, mathematics, theology, politics and craft etc, including, for example, Inigo Jones (1573-1652) [NPG 603] and Henry Marten (Martin) (1601/1602-1680).

Considering Cooper seems to have been kept busy at Cromwell's court in the 1650s, it is interesting to compare the present depiction with portraits of members of the Council of State,[3] many of whom are

portrayed in similar attire. The sitter would certainly have been a man of some position to commission a portrait from Cooper at this time.

[1] Circa 1653, now in the collection of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry. Later versions were produced from this, including one now at Compton Verney.

[2] See for example Cooper's portrait of John Holles, 2nd Earl of Clare (1595-1666), dated 1656, Private Collection, illustrated in Rutherford, E., Grosvenor, B., *Warts and All: The Portrait Miniatures of Samuel Cooper (1607/8-1672)*, 2013, cat. 34, p.97

[3] Created in 1649 and finally dissolved in 1660.

#### **Literature:**

Foster, J.J., *Samuel Cooper and the English Miniature Painters of the XVIIth Century*, Dickinsons, London, 1916, Supplementary Volume, p.78, as 'Unknown Man (A Divine)'.