THE LIMNER COMPANY

JEAN-BAPTISTE WEYLER (1747 - 1791)

Portrait miniature of a gentleman, traditionally identified as Jules 1st Duc de Polignac (1746-1817), wearing a plum-coloured jacket with embroidered detail, with a white stock and cravat, his wig 'en queue'

Circa: circa 1780s

circa 1780s

Watercolour on ivory (licence ZAJ6G17X)

Oval, 35 mm (1 ⅜ in) high

Though he came from an established French noble family, Armand Jules François de Polignac was the first Duke of his family, a title bestowed on him by Louis XVI in 1780. Thanks to his family connections, and especially the relationship of his wife, Gabrielle de Polignac, to Marie Antoinette, Jules enjoyed a lavish life within the court of Versailles. Gabrielle had become a favourite of the young Queen, and the pair were eventually given a thirteen-room apartment within the Palace of Versailles. Jules later became Director-General of the postal system (in 1785). This miniature, if it does depict Polignac, would have been painted at the height of Marie Antoinette's court, in the early 1780s, before the Polignac family were forced to flee during the Revolution.

This miniature was previously sold as attributed to the French School, though closer inspection of the signature reveals that this is in fact the work of Jean-Baptiste Weyler. He was born in Strasbourg and became well-known for his works on enamel, though the present work is painted on ivory. By the 1780s, he had become a member of the Academy of Paris. Before his untimely death in 1791, he was commissioned to paint a group of historical figures, including Benjamin Franklin (Tansey Miniatures Foundation, 10792), by the French Government.