THE LIMNER COMPANY



THE ARTIST D.N.

Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674), wearing brown robes, landscape background

Circa: 18th century

18th century

Watercolour on card

Signed 'DN' or 'DUN' on tree

This late 18th century portrait is taken from a lost self portrait of the court painter Philippe de Champaigne. The Louvre holds a replica of the self-portrait, copied by the painter's nephew Jean-Baptiste de Champaigne (1631-1681) [INV 1142].

This version, reversed from the oil painting replica, must be based on the engraving by Gérard Edelinck commissioned by Jean-Baptiste in 1676 to honor the memory of his uncle.

While difficult to decipher the initials carved into the tree, this is clearly an 18th century copy - the artist likely thought he was copying from an engraving based on the original self-portrait, as The Louvre painting was long considered tto be/ It was displayed in the Salon Carré in 1848, as one of the museum's masterpieces.

A major exponent of French Baroque painting, Philippe de Champaigne was a founding member of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in Paris, the premier art institution in the Kingdom of France during the Ancien Régime. He progressed rapidly as a court painter under Queen Marie de Médicis and secured patronage from influential figures like cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin, and King Louis XIII, creating religious works and portraits.

If the current portrait is indeed by Nicolas-François Dun, it may have been painted in Italy, where he ecame the leading court miniature painter in Naples during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Over a forty-year career in southern Italy, he chronicled the changing rulers of the Kingdom of Naples and visiting European nobility, but rarely strayed into copying earlier masterpieces.