THE LIMNER COMPANY



Circle of FRANCESCO TREVISANI (1656 - 1746)

Portrait oil of Maria Clementina Sobieska (1702–1735), half-length, wearing silver dress with crimson cloak, crimson curtain background and landscape in the distance

Circa: circa 1719

circa 1719

Oil on copper

Rectangular, 55 x 40 mm (2 $^{1}/_{8}$ x 1 $^{5}/_{8}$ in), 110 x 90 mm (4 $^{3}/_{8}$ x 3 $^{1}/_{2}$ in) framed

Italian early 18th-century Baroque repoussé silver frame

This small oil of Maria Clementina Sobieska was likely one of the many produced ‘in little’ by the oil painters employed to support the Stuart cause through the dissemination of images. Such images, including portrait miniatures, were regularly smuggled into England and Scotland to rally Catholic and Tory support for the Stuart cause.

Sobieska was the granddaughter of King John III Sobieski of Poland and daughter of Prince James Louis Sobieski and was one of the wealthiest heiresses in Europe during her lifetime. Although it does not directly derive from a singular extant portrait of Sobieska, it relates to the larger oils produced by Antonio David and Francesco Trevisani from around the time of her marriage in 1719. She married James Francis Edward Stuart (the "Old Pretender"), the Jacobite claimant to the thrones of England, Scotland, and Ireland, becoming the titular Jacobite Queen consort in exile in Rome.

As one of the wealthiest heiresses in Europe, Maria’s marriage to James was intended to bring wealth and prestige to the Stuart cause, but initial attempts at a union in 1718 were thwarted when the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI intercepted her at Augsburg and had her arrested. After months in captivity, Maria escaped and in the summer of 1719 she and James were married at Montefiascone. Two months later they moved into the Palazzo del Re in Rome which was provided by the Papacy, who

acknowledged them as King and Queen of England, Scotland and Ireland. It remained the permanent residence of the exiled Stuart court for the next forty-six years and it was here that Maria and James' children, Charles Edward ('Bonnie Prince Charlie') and Henry Benedict, were born.

The married life of Maria and James proved turbulent and unhappy. Soon after their second child's birth, Maria left James and went to live at the convent of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. She accused her husband of adultery and of relying too heavily on Protestant supporters – in turn he said it was sinful to leave him and her children. It was more than two years before they were officially reconciled. Although Maria agreed to leave the convent, they led separate lives. Prone to depression and anorexia (unrecognized as such and bound up with her strict and debilitating religious fasts), Maria spent much of her time in prayer. She died at the early age of 32 on 18 January 1735 and was buried in her nun's habit and interred with full royal honours in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Pope Clement XII ordered that she have a state burial and Pope Benedict XIV commissioned Pietro Bracchi to sculpt a monument to her memory, which was erected in the Basilica.