THE LIMNER COMPANY



ANTOINE VESTIER (1740 - 1824)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman, wearing blue coat with a white stock, his hair powdered and worn 'en queue' with black solitaire

Circa: circa 1780s

circa 1780s

Watercolour on ivory (licence NPZKU7EU)

Oval, 33 mm (1 ⅓ in) high

Gold bracelet clasp frame with rose gold and yellow gold decoration, the former shaped as roses and the latter shaped as leaves

The style of the present work is consistent with the work of Antoine Vestier, a French artist working in France, London, and the Netherlands throughout his career. He not only painted miniatures but also full-scale oils, though the handling of his portraits in both media was rather similar. The present work demonstrates his use of broad brushstrokes, which become more visible as one gets closer to the miniature.

Vestier's most successful period was spent in France, where from the 1780s onwards he exhibited at the Salon de Correspondence (1782) and the Salon of the Louvre (from 1785). He was an associate, then a member, of the Académie Royale, and from there he was made painter to King Louis XVI (in 1788).

The gentleman in this portrait is anonymous, though his dress dates him to the latter half of the 1780s, when the overly elaborate styles of the 1770s had subsided, though before the more distinct and symbolic fashions of the 1790s (and therefore of the French Revolution).

By the time of the revolution, Vestier's client base had thinned significantly, as aristocratic sitters had been forced to flee France, and it was difficult to find custom amongst revolutionaries, who were more

likely to see miniature painting as an art form associated with the ancien régime. By the 1790s, he was struggling to support himself with the vocation, writing that “What I earn is just enough to live from hand to mouth … I paint for myself; the works will be sold as soon as possible.”. He continued to work and live well into the nineteenth century, however, and died in Paris on Christmas Eve in 1824.

[1] From a letter dated February 4, 1791, published in Passez, Anne-Marie. Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Biographie et catalogue raisonné, Paris, 1973, p. 51.