THE LIMNER COMPANY



NORTHERN EUROPEAN SCHOOL

Portrait oil miniature of a Military Commander, half-length, wearing buff-coloured leather jerkin, patterned sleeves slashed to reveal white shirt, lace collar and sword baldric crossing his chest, one hand on the hilt of his rapier, drapery background

Circa: circa 1630

Oil on copper

Rectangular, 84 x 65mm (3.3 x 2.5in)

Framed with gilt-slip in ripple moulded tortoiseshell frame (glazed)

The sitter in this portrait, painted in the portable medium of oil on a copper plate, likely fought under the command of Charles Emmanuel I, Duke of Savoy (1562–1630). As a prominent military commander and statesman, he earned his moniker ‘the Great’ for his aggressive campaigns across northern Italy and ‘Testa di Fuoco’ or ‘hothead’ for his ambition.

Dating to the first half of the 17th century, this portrait might have been taken during the Wars of the Montferrat Succession (1613–1617 & 1628–1630), when Charles Emmanuel fought repeatedly against Spain and France to claim the neighbouring Duchy of Montferrat. The duke’s shifting alliances ultimately led Cardinal Richelieu to invade Savoy in 1630

Dressed as though painted in a large-scale oil format, the sitter here is depicted against a burgundy velvet curtain, held with gold tassels. He is dressed partially in military attire - the thick, tan leather jerkin designed to protect the torso from sword cuts and light projectiles while a dark embroidered military sash crosses his chest, and his left hand rests on the hilt of a rapier or dress sword, symbolising his rank as a commander. His fine lace collar, however, denotes him as a gentleman, or courtier, as do the gold aglets, which, by the 1630s, became a prominent fashion statement for men and a visible display of status.