THE LIMNER COMPANY



ITALIAN SCHOOL (18th century)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman on his Grand Tour, dressed in orange silk suit, the waistcoat embroidered, and lace shirt, his wig powdered, holding prints, the background showing the Classical buildings, likely the Uffizi Palace

Circa: circa 1710

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Watercolour on ivory (licence 2KGEAGX7)

Rectangular, 65 mm (2 $^{1}/_{2}$ in) high

Gilt-metal frame

This small portrait, with overtures of grandeur, shows a young man on his Grand Tour of Europe in the early 18th century. He holds prints or engravings likely bought on his travels, with the façade of the Uffizi Palace, (now the Uffizi Gallery) facing the Piazza della Signoria. The rows of rectangular windows separated by Doric pilasters, and deep overhanging eaves designed by Giorgio Vasari in the 16th century, were a ‘must’ for travellers keen to expand their worldly knowledge before settling back in England.

As well as absorbing the culture of Europe, gentlemen brought back with them artworks to outwardly display their newfound sophistication and connoisseurship. Here, an artist working on Florence has attempted in a ‘miniature’ format to ape the grand style of overblown oil portraiture by artists such as and Nicolas de Largillière (1656 -1746) and later Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787) and Johan Zoffany (1733-1810). The portrait miniature here perhaps owes more to the Venetian miniaturist Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757), who created sought-after pastels and portrait miniatures for European aristocrats passing through Venice. Portrait miniatures were particularly sought after, as their compact size and materials allowed them to dry quickly (unlike oil paint, watercolour dries almost immediately) to carry home and mount onto luxury objects like snuffboxes – a possible original setting for this example.