Miniature

Place of origin: Paris (possibly, made)
Geneva (possibly, made)

Date: 1789 (made)

Artist/Maker: Favre, Jean Francois (maker)

Materials and Techniques: Enamel on copper, gilt metal

Credit Line: The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Museum number: LOAN:GILBERT.254-2008

Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description

This enamel by Jean-François Favre was probably painted in Paris or Geneva. It depicts French politician Jean-Joseph Mounier, who was involved in the struggle between Parliament and Court on the eve of the French Revolution and was secretary of the assembly that drafted the grievances presented to Louis XVI. Elected president of the Constituent Assembly in 1789, he disapproved of later proceedings and resigned his post the following year.

The practice of painting portrait miniatures in enamels developed out of the decorative work of goldsmiths and watchmakers in the French cities of Blois, Châteaudun and Paris. Portrait plaques had been made in the enamelling workshops of Limoges in central France during the 16th century, but in the 1630s, Jean Toutin adapted existing techniques to make the subtle colouring and delicate detail of enamel miniatures possible. Small objects like watches or snuffboxes were ideally suited to this technique and many were decorated with portraits and mythological or allegorical scenes. Artists throughout Europe continually refined their approaches to painting enamel portraits. While 17th century enamellers used a very fine stipple to create light and shade in their miniatures, artists in the 18th century began to use larger brushstrokes for a more fluid effect.

Sir Arthur Gilbert and his wife Rosalinde formed one of the world's great decorative art collections, including silver, mosaics, enamelled portrait miniatures and gold boxes. Arthur Gilbert donated his extraordinary collection to Britain in 1996.

Descriptive line

Enamel miniature on copper of Jean-Joseph Mounier, in a gilt metal frame, Paris or Geneva, 1789, by Jean Francois Favre.

Physical description

Oval portrait miniature of Jean-Joseph Mounier shown bust-length, facing left, wearing a powdered wig, a dark grey coat, a yellow embroidered waistcoat and a knotted cravat. The frame is of gilt-metal with a ribbon twist border.

Dimensions

Height: 6.48 cm, Width: 5.21 cm, Depth: 0.6 cm

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Object history note


URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O157960/miniature-favre-jean-francois/