

Basic Detail Report



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Title: Cornelia Rutgers Livingston

Date: ca.1833

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3e59d

Medium: Oil on canvas

Description: Long known simply as "Portrait of a Little Girl," this painting portrays Cornelia Rutgers Livingston, who was named for her paternal great-grandmother, Cornelia Rutgers Le Roy. It is one of at least six portraits that Inman painted on commission for his devoted patron, Henry Livingston (1791-1828) of Claverack, New York. The Livingston family legacy included a number of ardent patrons of art, including Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, who founded the American Academy of the Fine Arts in New York in 1802. Portraits by American painters John Wollaston, John Mare, Thomas McIlworth, Gilbert Stuart, John Vanderlyn, John Wesley Jarvis, and others filled the family homes along the Hudson River in upstate New York. Each Livingston seemed to have his or her favorite portraitist, and for Henry Livingston that painter was Henry Inman. Livingston commissioned at least five portraits from Inman. Livingston lent the first three of these to the National Academy of Design in 1828: "Family Group of Six Children" (art market, New York, 1996), "Portrait of a Lady and Child", and "Portrait of a Gentleman" (both whereabouts unknown). These three portraits would have represented Henry Livingston's family to date: his six eldest children in the group portrait, his wife and infant daughter Anna in the double portrait, and presumably himself in the third portrait. In addition, according to the art critic C. Edwards Lester, Inman painted a picture of "Mrs. Livingston with her daughters seated around a table" (whereabouts unknown). (1) Inman also drew a pencil sketch of Livingston's horse, inscribed "A Portrait of Dick", (1827; private collection). Henry Livingston came to an untimely demise in 1828, before the birth of his daughter Cornelia in 1829. Her portrait, which matches that of her six older siblings in composition, palette, and iconography, was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1833, the property of a lender named only as "Livingston," presumably Ann Eliza Livingston, Henry's widow. A posthumous miniature portrait of Henry Livingston by Inman with the assistance of Thomas Seir Cummings, which may be a reduced replica of the 1828 National Academy portrait, was very likely also painted on commission from Mrs. Livingston. Inman contrived his portraits of the Livingston children, and especially that of Cornelia, according to the style of the Dutch Baroque limners' portraits that were so popular in his family and other so-called patroon families-affluent landholders who were early colonists along the Hudson River in New York State. She is standing on the porch of a grand estate, with an idyllic landscape behind her; she holds a basket of flowers from which she has plucked a delicate violet, symbolic of her virtue and purity. In this way, Cornelia Livingston is fashioned in a setting and manner similar to that used by the family of Duykinck portraitists in the seventeenth century and by the limners who

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flattered the De Peyster family in the eighteenth century. In these New York portraits, girls were often portrayed with just-picked wild flowers and boys with just-tamed wild animals usually in a grand setting that merged classical architectural forms with a natural landscape. The tradition was carried into the late eighteenth century by no less an artist than John Singleton Copley, who painted his portrait of Daniel Crommelin Verplanck (1771; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) according to the prototype. Inman wisely followed suit, placing Cornelia in a composition that emblemizes her family's affluence and her own promise as a disciplined and refined young lady. The architectural setting suggests, but does not actually depict, the Livingston family estate now known as Telavera in Claverack. The house was a wedding gift to Henry and Ann Eliza Livingston from her father.

CRB Bibliography: William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: George P. Scott, 1834); Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1867), pp. 233-46; Theodore Bolton, "Henry Inman: An Account of His Life and Work," *Art Quarterly* 3 (autumn 1940): 353-75, supp. 401-18; William H. Gerds, "Henry Inman: Genre Painter," *American Art Journal* 9 (May 1977): 26-48; William H. Gerds and Carrie Rebor, "The Art of Henry Inman", exhib. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1987). Notes: 1. C. Edwards Lester, "Artists of America" (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1846), p. 57.

Dimensions: 48 1/2 x 36 1/4 in. (60 1/8 x 48 x 4 1/4 in.)