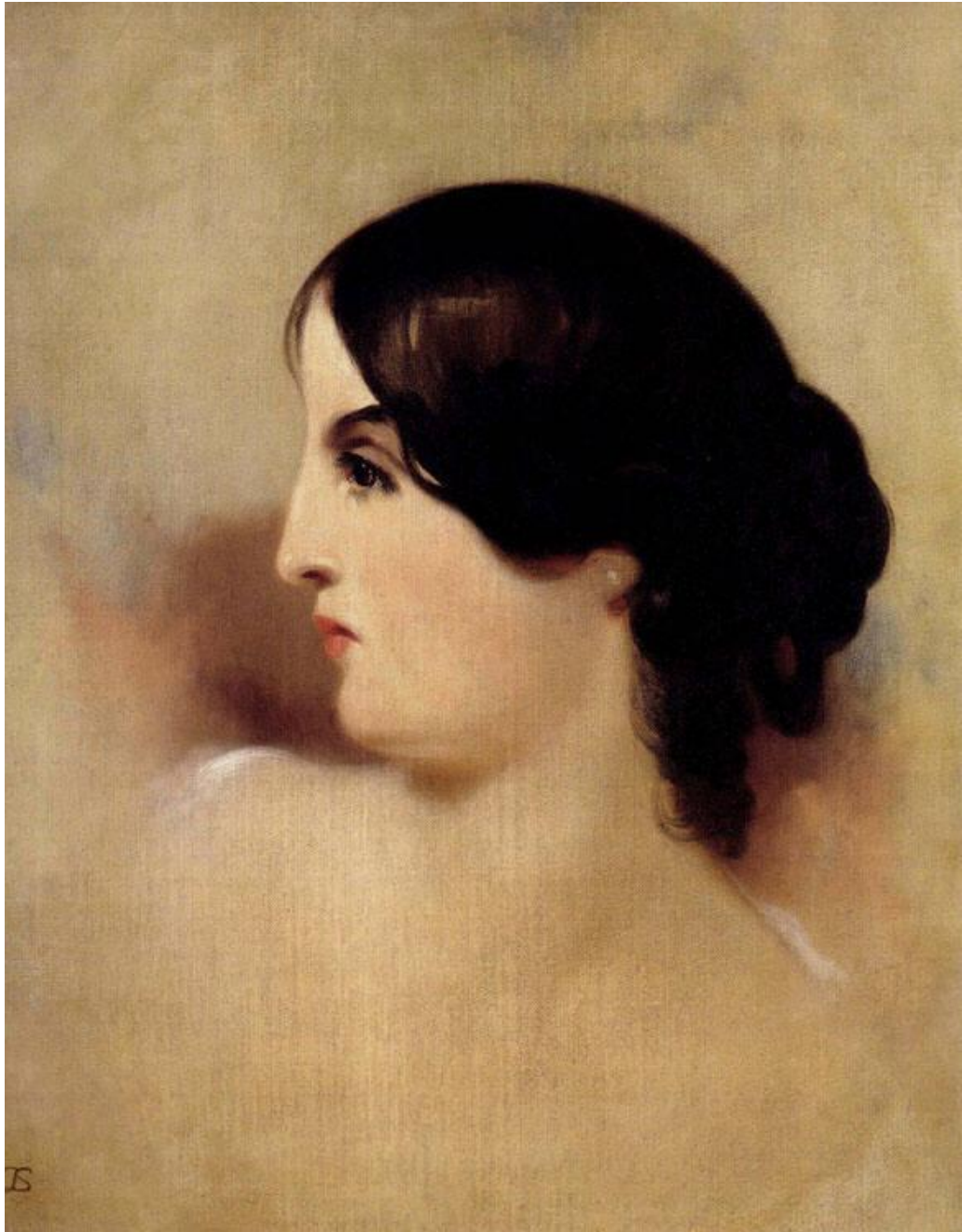


# Basic Detail Report



**Title: Blanch Sully (1814-1898)**

# Basic Detail Report

Date: ca. 1834

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3efc2

Medium: Oil on canvas mounted on wood panel

Description: Despite prodigious portrait commissions, Sully often found time to depict the members of his large family. Mrs. Sully is depicted in a number of paintings and drawings, often holding one of her babies; the young children are often seen sleeping or playing, posed singly or in groups. A number of portraits record the Sully children as they progressed from childhood to adulthood. Many of the Sully children learned to paint in their father's studio and often posed for one another. Sully painted this profile portrait of his daughter Blanch (1814-1898) as a teaching example for her sister Ellen (1816-1896), both of whom were his students. (1) (The fate of Ellen's student portrait of her sister on this occasion is unknown, though she did copy other portraits by her father and became known as an amateur painter.(2) Sully had many pupils throughout his long career, including seven members of his family. As Charles Robert Leslie recalled, Sully's teaching method was to paint a portion of a head on canvas while the student watched and copied the process.(3) This striking portrait is typical of Sully's work. The composition is simple and the palette limited, yet the result is nonetheless an elegant, beautiful portrait. Blanch wears a white off-the-shoulder dress, barely visible at the edges of the picture, and only the plainest of earrings. Her thick dark brown hair is piled upon her head and soft curls hang down the back of her neck. Her rosy lips and youthful ruddy complexion are accented by the warm rose and blue tones of the taupe background. The oval was a favorite portrait form that Sully used mainly for studies but also for finished works. Blanch was one of her father's favorite companions.(4) She posed for him numerous times and accompanied him on several extended trips. On one such journey, to England in 1837, she posed in the royal robes for Sully's portrait of Queen Victoria. Like many of her siblings, Blanch was an accomplished amateur artist, but her work is known mainly through sketches of Charleston that she executed on a trip with her father in 1841. Blanch never married and became her father's caretaker in 1867, when her mother died. As he noted in his register, Sully began the portrait on November 5 and finished on November 13; the selling price was eighty dollars.(5) While he recorded painting only one portrait of Blanch in 1834, the Indianapolis Museum of Art owns an 1834 portrait believed to depict her. (6) The woman in the New Britain portrait, with her youthful appearance and loosely styled curls, bears a closer resemblance to other portraits of Blanch than does the slightly older woman of the Indianapolis picture.(7) MAS Bibliography: William Dunlap, "A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States", 3 vols. (New York: George P. Scott, 1834; Rprt, Benjamin Blom, 1965), vol. 2, pp. 234-82; Charles Henry Hart, "A Register of Portraits Painted by Thomas Sully", 1801-1871 (Philadelphia: n.p., 1909), p. 158; Edward Biddle and Mantle Fielding, "The Life and Works of Thomas Sully" (1783-1872) (Philadelphia: Wickersham Press, 1921); Monroe H. Fabian, "Mr. Sully, Portrait Painter: The

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Works of Thomas Sully" (1783-1872), exhib. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1983). NOTES: 1 . Register of paintings, 1801-71, Thomas Sully Papers, New York Public Library (Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., microfilm reel N18, frame 40). The painting is also recorded in Hart, "A Register of Portraits", p. 158; and in Biddle and Fielding, "Life and Works", p. 284. 2. George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, New-York "Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America", 1564-1860 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 614. 3. Charles Robert Leslie, "Autobiographical Recollections" (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860), p. 19. 4. On Blanch Sully, see Biddle and Fielding, "Life and Works", pp. 49-52; and Groce and Wallace, "New-York Historical Society's Dictionary", p. 614. 5. Register of paintings, microfilm reel N18, frame 40. 6. "Blanch Sully", 1834, oil on canvas, 27 x 22 in., signed (verso) T.S. [monogram] 1834, acc. no. 56.157. 7. Furthermore, the size of the New Britain portrait corresponds to the standard 20 by 17 inch canvas Sully used for portrait heads (see Fabian, "Mr. Sully", p. 17).

Dimensions: 20 x 17 in. (50.8 x 43.2 cm) Frame Dimension: 24 x 21 1/2 in. (61 x 54.6 cm)