

CORNEILLE DE LYON

French school, active 1533-34, --died 1574.

This artist was born in the Hague, probably around 1500-1510, and moved to France from there. His family name is unknown ; it has been suggested that Corneille may represent a gallicization of the Dutch family name Corneliszen. He established himself in the city of Lyons (hence the eponym "de Lyon"), residing there from before 1534 until his death. He is mentioned in 1541 as painter to the Dauphin (the future Henry II), received French naturalization in 1547, and is recorded in 1551 as bearing the title of "painter and valet of the king's bedchamber". The last mention of him comes in 1574.

He is known through other sixteenth century records to have had a high reputation as a painter of portraits, mostly of members of the French court. But no certain work of his is known, and the situation as regards attributions is a confused and difficult one. Briefly, the sole basis for the ascription of works to him is that certain portraits in the collection of Roger de Gagnières (1642-1715), who bought pictures in Lyons in the seventeenth century, were attested then as being by Corneille de Lyon. A group of five portraits which found their way to Versailles, Chantilly, the Louvre, and from ~~there~~ ~~passed~~ ~~into~~ the Pierpont Morgan collection, have been identified as coming from Gagnières' collection ; and so have other portraits on the basis of seals on the backs of them. Further attributions to the artist have to depend upon this core of works ; but it would appear that studio-pieces are involved even here, ^{and} all that one can legitimately speak of is of a type of portrait associated with the practice of Corneille de Lyon --a type involving small, bust-length depictions of men and women of the French nobility, with pale flesh, small hands and most often a green background.

It is evident from the number of repetitions that Corneille must have maintained a large atelier ; and probably his son, also called Corneille, and his daughter were amongst those employed in this capacity. Remoter derivations and imitations suggest further that he and his atelier created an

international vogue for the type of portrait in question --
a vogue which spread outside France to Germany, the Netherlands
and Italy.

Portrait of a Man in a court bonnet (called "René du Puy du Fou")

oil on panel, 6 × 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ ins.

Provenance

Walter Gay, Paris (1904) ; Jules Strauss, Paris ; J. Seligmann and son, Paris (by 1937) ; Seligmann Galleries, New York. Acquired by Dr Clowes in 1947.

Literature

H. Bouchot, cat. of Exposition des Primitifs français, Louvre - Bibliothèque Nationale, Apr.-Jul. 1904, no. 177 ; L. Dimier, Le portrait du XVI^e siècle aux primitifs français; notes et corrections au catalogue officiel....., Paris, 1904, pp. 17f. ; C. Sterling, cat. of exhibn. Chefs d'Œuvre de l'Art Français, Palais National des Arts, Paris, 1937, p. 29, no. 49 (no. 30 in the double vol. of illustrations, ed. R. Burnand).

Exhibited

Paris, 1904 (see lit.) ; Art Through the Ages, Cleveland Museum of Art, Oct.-Nov. 1931, (no cat.)⁽¹⁾ ; Cinq Siècles d'Art, Exposition Universelle et Internationale, Brussels, May-Oct. 1935, s. N. I, no. 925 ; Paris, 1937 (see lit.) ; Ind., 1959, no. 19.

Attributed by Bouchot in the 1904 catalogue to the school of Corneille de Lyon, with a date of around 1555 ; then to Corneille himself in the 1937 catalogue, with a date of around 1550. The portrait may very possibly be by this artists, in terms of type and quality ; there is at the same time no basis for giving it a date.

The identification of the sitter as René du Puy du Fou (1528-1570)⁽²⁾ goes back also to the 1904 catalogue, and was

based there on the resemblance to a drawing at Chantilly.⁽³⁾ Dimier in his comments on the catalogue justly queried this identification.⁽⁴⁾ It was used again in the 1937 catalogue, with a note there that the name of Rabelais had also been suggested. Both identifications appear equally unjustified,⁽⁵⁾ any resemblance there might be to other works being insufficient basis for giving this sitter a name.

Notes.

1. Information from Cleveland Museum records,
2. He married the widow of Charles de Cabannes, Catherine de la Rochefoucauld, and became Chevalier de l'Ordre in 1562
3. Box xi, no. 369.
4. To quote his actual words : "...ce crayon (the Versailles drawing), contredit par la lettre d'un panneau de Versailles (no. 3223) qui le nomme François III, comte de Laroche foucauld, est definitivement démenti, par ce même nom inscrit sur une copie, de la collection de l'archiduc Ferdinand (tab. B, no. 210)". Dimier curiously did not include the Clowes painting, though he knew it, in his publication Histoire de la Peinture de Portrait en France au XVI^e Siècle, (3 vols., Paris, 1924-26).
5. Rabelais usually wears a doctor's hat, and the other three works cited by Dimier (see n.4) allow no conclusion, (information from D. Bentley-Cranch, letter to the compiler, Jul. 23, 1966)