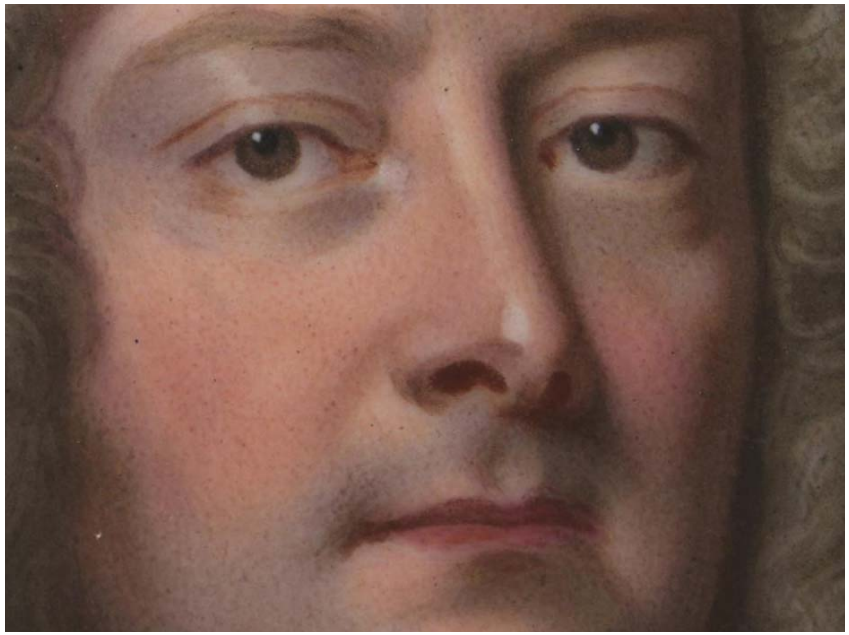

CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH ZINCKE (German, 1683/85–1767)

Portrait of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough

1715

Enamel on copper; oval, 6.4 x 5.1 cm (2½ x 2 in.)

Signature: on back: CF Zincke fecit / 1715. [CF in monogram]

Setting: gilt metal frame

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1949.549

Provenance

?
Nyberg, London.

by 1949
Leo Schidlof (1886–1966, London).

1949
Purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) from Leo Schidlof for $480 in June; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, December 23, 1949.

1949
The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Exhibitions

None.

Bibliography

Carlsen, G. Robert, et al. *Western Literature, Themes and Writers,* p. 442 (repr.). New York: Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Co., 1967.

Coffin, Sara, and Bodo Hofstetter. *Portrait Miniatures in Enamel: The Gilbert Collection,* p. 116. London: Philip Wilson, 2000.

Milliken, William M., and Harry B. Wehle. *Portrait Miniatures: The Edward B. Greene Collection,* p. 32, no. 49, pl. IV. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1951.

JOHN CHURCHILL (1650–1722) is turned slightly to the left and looks directly at the viewer. He has a cleft chin and brown eyes and wears a light brown, curly wig that falls past his shoulders and down his back. He is dressed in armor, a high white collar with a red ruffled border, and a bright blue cloak that covers his left shoulder. The background is brownish gray. The counter-enamel has the rough, mottled appearance characteristic of the first part of Christian Friedrich Zincke's career and is inscribed in elegant script: "CF Zincke fecit / 1715." (fig. 1).

Churchill is among the greatest military commanders in British history. He fought for King William III of Orange during the overthrow of Churchill's former patron King James II. He was created the 1st Duke of Marlborough in 1702 by Queen Anne. Churchill was distinguished in numerous military campaigns, including the Battle of Blenheim in 1704, helping to defeat the Franco-Bavarian army during the War of the Spanish Succession. Subsequent disfavor incurred by Churchill and his wife, Sarah, at court finally resulted in self-imposed exile on the Continent in late 1712. He returned in 1714 when the Hanoverian king George I acceded to the throne.

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Figure 1. Counter-enamel inscribed "CF Zincke fecit / 1715." (detail).

Figure 2. *Portrait of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough*, c. 1705. Charles Boit (Swedish, 1663–1727). Enamel on copper, silver-gilt; 11.9 x 8.3 cm (4¾ x 3¼ in.). The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 302-2008. V&A: © V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Figure 3. *Portrait of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough*, c. 1710. Christian Friedrich Zincke. Enamel on copper; 9.3 x 6.3 cm (3¾ x 2½ in.). The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 288-2008. V&A: © V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

This enamel is an extremely fine example of Zincke's work, painted at the height of his career in 1715, the year after his debt-plagued master, Charles Boit (1663–1727), was forced to leave England for France. Boit departed leaving unfinished his demanding 1704 commission for a large enamel commemorating the Battle of Blenheim, but he had completed an enamel portrait of Churchill with the battle depicted in the background about 1705, around the time Zincke began working in Boit's studio (fig. 2). Zincke executed several portraits of Churchill. A version in the Victoria and Albert Museum is dated c. 1710 and depicts the duke with his cleft chin less pronounced and wearing the blue cape and collar of the Order of the Garter (fig. 3).[1]

In 1714—the same year Churchill returned to London from exile—Christian Richter (1678–1732) painted the original version of Zincke's portrait. Richter, a Swedish painter who immigrated to London in 1702, was associated with Boit and was best known for

1 Sara Coffin and Bodo Hofstetter, *Portrait Miniatures in Enamel*: *The Gilbert Collection* (London: Philip Wilson, 2000), pp. 32, 51.

Figure 4. *Portrait of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough.* Christian Richter (Swedish, 1678–1732). Watercolor on vellum; 8.2 x 6.7 cm (3¼ x 2⅝ in.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Mary Clark Thompson, 1923, 24.80.508.

Figure 5. *Portrait of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough,* 1714. Christian Richter (Swedish, 1678–1732). Watercolor on vellum; dimensions unknown. Buccleuch Collection.

painting miniatures in watercolor after large-scale portraits by artists such as Peter Lely (1618–1680) and Michael Dahl (1656/59–1743). Since he rarely painted sitters from life, the possibility remains that Zincke's enamel is after a full-scale oil painting by another artist not yet discovered.[2] One version by Richter, painted in watercolor on vellum, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 4). This portrait is itself an autograph replica of one in the collection of the Duke of Buccleuch that is signed and dated 1714 (fig. 5).[3] Churchill would have been 64 years old at this date. While the portrait seems to depict a much younger man at the height of physical and intellectual prowess, the light-colored wig corresponds to those worn by the duke during this period, unlike the darker brown wigs in which he is usually depicted in portraits before 1700. The decision to be portrayed in

2 Daphne Foskett, *Miniatures: Dictionary and Guide* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1987; repr., 2000), pp. 154–55. Foskett notes that a facial deformity caused Richter to work as a copyist instead of painting miniatures *ad vivum,* since his appearance would make social intercourse with sitters uncomfortable.

3 H. A. Kennedy, *Early English Portrait Miniatures in the Collection of the Duke of Buccleuch* (London: The Studio, 1917), p. 41, pl. LXI (repr.).

armor reveals how the duke wished to be regarded during this period of the Hanoverian dynasty's assent: a soldier poised to serve his king. By 1714 armorial portraits were *retardataire* and primarily adopted by monarchs.

Another version of this enamel, also signed by Zincke but wrongly identified as *Portrait of Thomas, Eighth Earl of Pembroke*, was sold at Christie's, London, in 1987 (fig. 6). This portrait is slightly smaller than the Cleveland Museum of Art's version, and the duke's eyes are somewhat more narrowed. Both enamels by Zincke depict less armor and background than the Richter, and they have more schematic curls. This quality is consistent with their nature as enamels, a medium less inclined to the fine, linear brushwork seen in the vellum original. Zincke, however, combined the defiant character communicated by Richter with a masterful treatment of light, shadow, and texture, particularly visible in the luminous flesh tones.

Although miniatures are often regarded as a private art form exchanged between loved ones, the nature of this enamel was likely political. The existence of multiple versions of this formidable, age-defying portrait suggests that the strategic gift of this enamel might have been one of the many favor-currying devices employed by a man whose cold-blooded ambition and boundless self-promotion enabled him to retain positions of power and influence through the pitfalls of service to six English monarchs in succession. CORY KORKOW

Figure 6. *Portrait of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough.* Incorrectly identified as *Portrait of Thomas Herbert, 8th Earl of Pembroke*. Christian Friedrich Zincke. Enamel; h. 5.7 cm (2¼ in.). From *English and Foreign Silver, Objects of Vertu and Fine Portrait Miniatures* (London: Christie's, 25 November 1987), lot 400, p. 124 (repr.).