

French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945

The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Editor



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Attributed to Joseph Karl Stieler, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, ca. 1815

Artist	Attributed to Joseph Karl Stieler, German, 1781–1858
Former Attribution	Baron François Gérard, French, 1770–1837
Title	<i>Portrait of a Gentleman</i>
Object Date	ca. 1815
Medium	Oil on canvas
Dimensions (Unframed)	25 9/16 x 21 1/8 in. (64.9 x 53.7 cm)
Credit Line	The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 35-38/2

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Catalogue Entry

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MLA:

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Fig. 1. François Gérard, *Count Louis Joseph Marie de Plessis de Grénédan*, 1801, oil on canvas, 25 3/8 x 21 3/8 in. (64.6 x 54.4 cm), private collection, New York

Neither signed nor dated, this portrait of an unidentified man was probably painted around 1815. The sitter's dress and hairstyle conform to men's fashions of this date, as documented in contemporaneous portraits of French and British sitters.¹ The green wool coat fastened with braided loops, or frogging, reflects the influence of hussar uniforms and was in vogue during the Napoleonic era. The sitter's curly auburn hair, worn in a variation of the classicizing style *à la Titus* popularized in the 1790s, is made modern by the long sideburns.² He sports an insignia mounted on a gold bar, or *bavette*, of a type worn in the second decade of the nineteenth century to denote membership in an order active in France, the Netherlands, and present-day Belgium. The order itself, represented by a five-pointed white star surmounted by what appears to be a crown, has eluded identification to this date.³



Fig. 2. François Gérard, *Count Louis-Michel Pac*, ca. 1809, oil on canvas, 28 x 20 1/2 in. (71 x 52 cm); sold at *Importants tableaux anciens et du XIXe siècle*, Sotheby's Monaco, December 2, 1994, lot 99

The format of the portrait, in which the sitter is shown bust-length and silhouetted against a cloud-streaked sky, was popular in early nineteenth-century French painting.⁴ Here the absence of a horizon line lends the figure a monumental aspect. This compositional type recurs in numerous portraits of male sitters painted by

Baron François Gérard between 1800 and 1815, the period during which he eclipsed his former master Jacques Louis David (1748–1825) as the most sought-after portraitist in Napoleonic France.⁵ The composition of the present work, which the Nelson-Atkins acquired in 1935 as a portrait by Gérard, recalls his portraits of Count Louis Joseph Marie de Plessis de Grénédan (1801; Fig. 1) and Comte Louis-Michel Pac (1809; Fig. 2).⁶

However, there are no contemporaneous sources that support the attribution of this portrait to Gérard, which appears to date from a 1920 auction catalogue in which the work was sold as "School of Gérard" and resold a decade later as a Gérard. The restrained handling of the paint further calls Gérard's authorship into question.⁷ The work is thinly painted overall, and an opaque white ground layer effaces the texture of the canvas support. The use of impasto is limited to areas of reflected light, notably on the sitter's forehead and the gold bar pinned to the lapel, and to such details as the braided trim on the jacket.⁸ The figure itself is tightly painted, with almost no visible brushwork, which creates a hard, polished surface finish, set off by the more loosely brushed backdrop of clouds. In contrast, contemporaneous works by Gérard feature a freer, more painterly handling, particularly in the rendering of different materials and textures, in which Gérard unleashed his bravura brushwork. In Gérard's paintings, the polished surface finish, a legacy of his Neoclassical training, is tempered by a softer, more visible touch, distinguishing his technique from that of the artist who painted the Nelson-Atkins portrait.

During the Empire (1789–1814/15), Gérard maintained a thriving studio practice in Paris, fueled by the mounting demand for his portraits of Napoleon and other members of the imperial court.⁹ Among his students was the German painter Joseph Karl Stieler (1781–1858), who spent 1807–8 in Gérard's atelier. In 1812, Stieler established himself as a portraitist in Munich, where his sitters ranged from members of the middle class to royalty; he was appointed court painter to Ludwig I, King of Bavaria, in 1820. The portraits he realized after his French sojourn reflect his assimilation of Gérard's style both in composition and handling.¹⁰ In fact, several portraits by Stieler have been erroneously attributed to Gérard.¹¹ *Portrait of a Gentleman* shares stylistic similarities with a group of oval portrait busts of Prince Karl Theodor of Bavaria set against a landscape backdrop, painted by Stieler in 1816 and 1817.¹² Like Stieler's portrait of the prince in a green riding coat (Fig. 3), the sitter is shown in a three-quarters pose, and the

facial features, particularly the eyes, are similarly rendered. In both, the facture appears smooth,

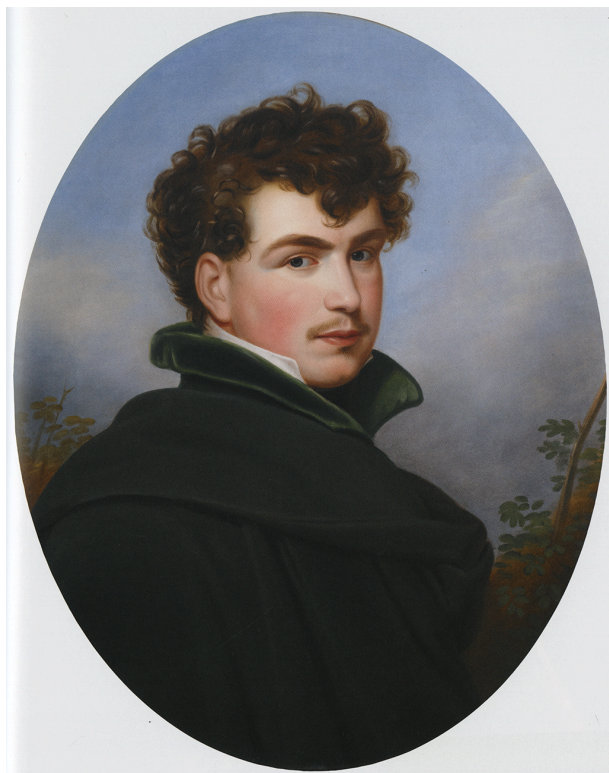


Fig. 3. Joseph Karl Stieler, *Prince Karl Theodor of Bavaria*, ca. 1816–17, oil on canvas, 27 1/4 x 21 7/16 in. (69.5 x 55 cm); sold at *Bernheimer Evening Sale*, Sotheby's, London, November 24, 2015, lot 40

with little visible brushwork. The handling of the hair, with individually delineated curls set against flat patches of color, is especially alike. These stylistic affinities suggest that *Portrait of a Gentleman*, painted around the same date as the portraits of Prince Karl, might well be the work of Stieler.¹³ Although the work cannot/has not been attributed with certainty to Stieler, it attests to Gérard's influence on the development of nineteenth-century portraiture in France and beyond.

Kathryn Calley Galitz
May 2019/March 2024

Notes

1. In an email of March 15, 2013, to the author, Aileen Ribeiro, professor emerita, Courtauld Institute of Art, suggested a date of ca. 1815, based on the sitter's hussar-influenced frockcoat, similar to one in Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867)'s 1816 portrait drawing of Sir John Hay and his sister Mary (British Museum, London).
2. See Aileen Ribeiro, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France 1750–1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 104–9.
3. I thank Stephen Patterson of the Royal Collection Trust for his assistance in attempting to identify the order, as conveyed in an email to the author of April 13, 2019.
4. Comparable works include Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres's *Baron Joseph Pierre Violetès de Montarieu* (1805–6; Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, CA), as suggested by Richard Rand, as well as Antoine Jean Gros (1771–1835), *Count Honoré de La Riboisière* (1815; private collection).
5. On Gérard's portraits, see Kathryn Calley Galitz, "François Gérard: Portraiture, Scandal, and the Art of Power in Napoleonic France," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 71, no. 1 (2013): 5–48; and Xavier Salmon, *Peintre des rois, roi des peintres: François Gérard (1770–1837), Portraitiste* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux-Grand Palais, 2014).
6. Other examples of portraits in this format by Gérard include *Général Horace Sebastiani* (1806) and *Général Antoine Charles Louis, comte de Lasalle* (1808). Both are reproduced as engravings in [Henri Gérard], *Oeuvre du Baron François Gérard, 1789–1836: Gravures à l'eau forte* (Paris: Vignères et Rapilly, 1857), unpaginated.
7. Alain Latreille, who is currently preparing a catalogue raisonné of the artist's work, rejected the attribution to Gérard based on a photograph of the work in an email to the author of April 12, 2013, as did Udo Felbinger, author of "François Gérard und das französische Porträt 1795–1815" (PhD diss., Freie Universität, Berlin, 1999), in an email to the author of September 14, 2013. Felbinger suggested that the work is by a student of Jacques Louis David.

8. See technical notes by Nathan Sutton, paintings conservation graduate intern, January 28, 2010, with additions by Mary Schafer, NAMA painting conservator, January 13, 2012, NAMA conservation files.
9. For a partial list of Gérard's studio assistants, see Henri Gérard, ed., *Correspondance de François Gérard, Peintre d'Histoire* (Paris: Ad. Lainé et J. Havard, 1867), 130n1.
10. On Gérard's influence, see Ulrike von Hase, *Joseph Stieler, 1781–1858* (Munich: Prestel, 1971), 38–43.
11. For example, a portrait of Ludwig I, King of Bavaria (ca. 1825; Walters Art Museum), now attributed to the studio of Stieler, was thought to be by Gérard in 1934—one year before the Nelson-Atkins acquired the present work as a Gérard. A bust-length portrait of Eugène de Beauharnais attributed to Gérard (ca. 1816; Napoleon Museum, Arenenburg) is by Stieler; for the attribution to Stieler, see Felbinger, "François Gérard und das französische Porträt," 2:77.
12. On the series, see von Hase, *Joseph Stieler*, nos. 66–68, p. 125.
13. In an email to the author of February 7, 2024, Ulrike von Hase-Schmundt affirmed that, based on a digital image, "it could be a work of Stieler in the years about 1815," noting that Stieler was working in both Munich and Vienna at this time.

Technical Entry

Technical entry forthcoming.

Documentation

Citation

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Glynnis Stevenson, "Attributed to Joseph Karl Stieler, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, ca. 1815," documentation in *French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945: The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*, ed. Aimee Marcereau DeGalan (Kansas City: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.37764/78973.5.419.4033>.

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Stevenson, Glynnis. "Attributed to Joseph Karl Stieler, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, ca. 1815," documentation. *French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945: The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*, edited by Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2024. doi: 10.37764/78973.5.419.4033.

Provenance

Marie-Thérèse Trinidad (née Brocheton, 1872–1958), Comtesse de la Béraudière, Paris, as by the École du [School of] Baron Gérard, *Portrait d'Homme en habit vert (Portrait of a Man in a Green Outfit)*, by February 28, 1920–December 11, 1930 [1];

Purchased from her sale, *Important Oil Paintings With Outstanding Examples by Velazquez, Goya, El Greco, Brueghel, Luttichuys, Bouts, Fabritius, Mierevelt, Romney, Greuze, Roslin, Saint-Aubin, Deshayes; Fine French Furniture of the Eighteenth Century Carvings; Sculptures and Other Objects of Art; Including the Superb Portrait Bust of the Countess de la Béraudière, 4 rue Alfred de Vigny, Paris, France*, American Art Association, Anderson Art Galleries, New York, December 11, 1930, lot 73, as by Gérard, and erroneously as *Portrait of M. le Comte de B[éraudière]*, by unknown buyer, 1930 [2];

Marcel Jules Rougeron (1875–1958), New York, by April 24, 1935;

Purchased from Rougeron by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, 1935.

Notes

[1] Although the Comtesse de la Béraudière inherited the collection of her father-in-law, Jacques-Victor (1819–1885), Comte de la Béraudière, this painting does not appear in collection catalogues of her husband's ancestors. The Comtesse also added to her collection with her own purchases. She had the painting by 1920, when it appeared in her first collection sale, but it failed to find a buyer. See *Catalogue des tableaux anciens et modernes. Aquarelles, Dessins, Pastels anciens et modernes, Meubles et tapisseries du XVIIIe siècle et autres; Provenant de la collection de Madame X [de la Béraudière]* (Paris: Hôtel Drouot, February 28, 1920), 4, as by École du Baron Gérard, *Portrait d'Homme en habit vert*.

[2] Despite how the 1930 sales catalogue identifies the artist and the sitter, there is no painting by Gérard of Béraudière nor any known portrait of a "comte de B" in

the only known Gérard catalogue raisonné: *Œuvre du baron François Gérard, 1789–1836: gravures à l'eau forte*, 3 vols. (Paris: Vignères, 1852).

Exhibitions

Five Years of Collecting, The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City, MO, December 4–11, 1938, no cat.

References

Catalogue des tableaux anciens et modernes; Aquarelles, Dessins, Pastels anciens et modernes; Meubles et tapisseries du XVIIIe siècle et autres: Provenant de la collection de Madame X [de la Béraudière] (Paris: Hôtel Drouot, February 28, 1920), 4, as by École du Baron Gérard, *Portrait d'Homme en habit vert*.

Important Oil Paintings With Outstanding Examples by Velazquez, Goya, El Greco, Brueghel, Luttichuys, Bouts, Fabritius, Mierevelt, Romney, Greuze, Roslin, Saint-Aubin, Deshayes; Fine French Furniture of the Eighteenth Century, Carvings, Sculptures, and Other Objects of Art; Including the Superb Portrait Bust of the Countess de la Béraudière, 4 rue Alfred de Vigny, Paris, France (New York: American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, December 11–13, 1930), 61, as by Gérard, and erroneously as *Portrait of M. le Comte de B[éraudière]*.

"Portrait Reflecting Era of its Creation is Masterpiece of Week," *Kansas City Journal-Post* 82, no. 14 (October 6, 1935): 2B, (repro.), as by Gérard, *Portrait of a Gentleman*.

"'Visit Your Gallery Week' Designated December 4-11," *Kansas City Journal* 85, no. 66 (November 27, 1938): 36, as by Gérard, *Portrait of a Gentleman*.

"Five Years of Collecting," *News Flashes* 5, no. 9 (The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts) (December 1, 1938): unpaginated, as by Gérard, *Portrait of a Gentleman*.

Paul Gardner, "Kansas City: Jubilee and an Acquisition," *Art News* 37, no. 10 (December 3, 1938): 19, as by Gérard, *Portrait of a Gentleman*.

The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, *The William Rockhill Nelson Collection*, 2nd ed. (Kansas City, MO: William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, 1941), 168, as by Gérard, *Portrait of a Gentleman*.

Winifred Shields, "The Inner-Self of Portrait Subjects Shown on Canvass [sic]," *Kansas City Star* 77, no. 134 (February 1, 1957): 6, (repro.), as by Gérard, *Portrait of a Gentleman*.

Ross E. Taggart, ed., *Handbook of the Collections in the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts*, 4th ed. (Kansas City, MO: William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, 1959), 260, as by Gérard, *Portrait of a Gentleman*.

Ross E. Taggart and George L. McKenna, eds., *Handbook of the Collections in The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City, Missouri*, vol. 1, *Art of the Occident*, 5th ed. (Kansas City, MO: William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, 1973), 258, as by Gérard, *Portrait of a Gentleman*.

Susan Wise, ed., *European Portraits, 1600–1900, In the Art Institute of Chicago* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1978), 68, as *Portrait of a Gentleman*.
