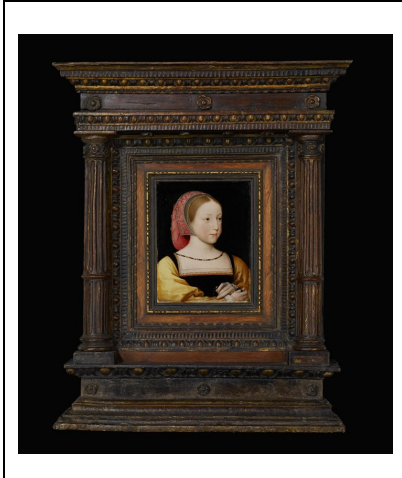

Title of Object

Portrait of Charlotte of France

Photo of Object (optional)



Object Information

Artist: Jean Clouet the Younger

Country: France

Date of Object: c. 1522

File Created: 5/1/2016

Accession Number: 35.7.98

Author of File: Lucy Hicks

Material/Medium: oil on cradled panel

Reviewer of File: Kara ZumBahlen

Department: Paintings

Last Updated/Reviewed: 9/5/2017

Culture: French

Tour Topics

Women, Power/status, Family, Identity, Fashion/dress, Children, wealth, Christianity, Catholic

Questions and Activities (list 3 to 4 sample questions here):

Describe what she is wearing. How would the garments feel if you could touch them?

Do you think Charlotte looks like a typical 7-year old? What do you see that makes you say that?

Why do you think this painting is so small compared to the rest of the paintings in this gallery?

Key Points (Form: subject matter, medium and techniques of manufacture, style, etc.)

This is a portrait of Charlotte, the second daughter of the French king Francis I. She is shown at an age around 6 or 7 here, and she died not long after this was painted, at the age of 7 years and 8 months;

possibly her death was caused by the measles. (Wikipedia) It was common for children to die early due to the many diseases for which there were no cure or immunizations.

Clouet used oil paints on a wooden panel. He probably started this painting with a sketch on the gessoed surface of the panel, and then he did the flesh tones, ending with the costume and background before adding details of jewelry and other accessories. He incorporated great detail, with almost no visible brush strokes. She is presented in the finest jewelry, hairstyle and costume. Her rosary reflects her devotion to the Catholic faith. The dark background allows her face to pop so we focus on that. (Cultural Reflections in Art, AAG)

The costume has been minutely and exactly rendered, but it does not obtrude on the chief interest of the picture: the face. Clouet neatly captured the old-young, slightly wary expression that young Charlotte was wearing at the moment he set down his impression. The finely detailed brushwork of the painting plays its own important role in the portrait, making her seem so lifelike to our eyes. This was the style of portraiture developed during the Renaissance, and Clouet was influenced by both Flemish and Italian painting. (Stokstad and Cothren, 691-693)

Charlotte wears the dress of an adult woman of that time; over the linen chemise, she wears a golden silk tunic covered with a black velvet over-gown. She wears a coral cap called a chaperon, made of velvet or quilted silk and decorated richly with pearls. Just under her cap. You can see a thin linen or gauze layer that fastens around her chin. She has details of intricate lace and jewelry. (Cultural Reflection in Art, AAG) Considering Charlotte is only 7 years old, it probably would have been difficult for her to sit still continually for such a detailed portrait. Royal clothing was often loaned to the artist or modeled by a servant to spare the sitter the boredom of posing for a long time. (Stokstad and Cothren, 693)

Key Points (Context: use, history, cultural information, artist bio, etc.)

Artist bio: Jean Clouet the Younger was the principal painter (in 1927) at the court of Francis I of France. "Jean Clouet, byname Janet, or Jehannet (born c. 1485—died c. 1540, Paris, Fr.), Renaissance painter of portraits celebrated for the depth and delicacy of his characterization. Although he lived in France most of his life, records show that he was not French by origin and was never naturalized. He was one of the chief painters to Francis I as early as 1516 and was appointed groom of the chamber from 1523, thus enjoying the salary and social position granted to the most prominent poets and scholars of the time. In the early 1520s he lived in Tours and from 1529 in Paris. He painted chiefly portraits, but, at least in the earlier part of his career, he also produced religious subjects (a "St. Jerome" in 1522; designs for the "Four Evangelists," 1523)....

...Until recently, the works attributed to Clouet consisted of a group of about 130 preparatory drawings representing members of the French court between 1514 and 1540 and a small group of miniatures and oil paintings, the drawings for which can be found among those of the first group. None of these, however, is signed or documented as the work of Jean Clouet. Consequently, their attribution to Clouet was merely tentative. But the discovery and cleaning of the well-documented "Portrait of Guillaume Budé" enabled the characteristics of Clouet's art to be established. Budé himself stated about 1536 that Jean Clouet had painted a portrait of him. Since the preparatory drawing for this picture exists in Chantilly and is obviously by the same hand as the other drawings, the attribution to Jean Clouet of all the aforementioned works ceased to be merely hypothetical....

...Clouet was one of the best 16th-century portrait painters, both incisive and delicate in the psychological characterization of sitters. His drawings are simple, broad, and subtle; his paintings are fresh in colour, subdued in modeling, and minute in execution. His technique seems fundamentally Flemish...but the supple drawing, the calm plasticity, and the acute analysis of the individual in his portraits are typically French. In his youth he could have been influenced by the already ancient French tradition of portrait drawing. On the other hand, his monumental composition is influenced by the Italian Renaissance portraiture introduced into France by Andrea Solari. Some of Clouet's portraits also show similarities to those by Holbein, who in his turn borrowed the technique of portrait drawing in colored chalks, or pastels, from Clouet." (Britannica)

This was most likely painted for personal use and not state use, maybe displayed in a bedroom or parlor. Perhaps it was displayed with portraits of her siblings. There were few portraits prior to 1500, and only the wealthiest people could commission such works. Francis I was the first king to favor paintings over other arts, and he sponsored the work of Italian Renaissance masters, too (Cultural Reflections in Art). Leonardo da Vinci actually died in France, while living and working there at the invitation of Francis I.

Clashes between the Catholics and Protestant churches had a profound impact on the art of the time. Charlotte was Catholic, like her father, and holds a rosary. Charlotte was one of seven children born to Francis I of France and his wife, Queen Claude. She was the second-born child, and after the death of her sister Louise, she was engaged at the age of 2 to Charles I of Spain. (Wikipedia) As with any child of a European royal house at that time, she would have been strategically married to cement an alliance or gain more territory for her family.

Current Mia Label Information (optional)

Princess Charlotte was the daughter of King Francis I of France, whose court was an international center for the arts. Her rich clothing and jeweled cap show her high status. Her rosary indicates that she was a devout Catholic. She was about seven years old at the time of this portrait, and she died at the age of eight. European royal families commissioned portraits of their children to record their development and often exchanged these pictures with other royal houses as a diplomatic gesture.

Sources of Information and/or Prop Ideas (photos/videos)

Class notes from Mia

Wikipedia articles: Francis I of France; Charlotte of France; Claude of France

Art History, 5e, Stokstad and Cothren, pp. 691-693.

Jean Clouet, French Painter: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Clouet>

Cultural Reflections in Art, AAG set 2017, found on <http://ipevolunteers.org>

A small /book of Hours, belonging to Catherine de Medici; the illustration below (from Wikipedia, Claude of France) is in the book, and appears to show Charlotte in the lower left corner, based on Clouet's portrait. This link to the Biblioteque Nationale brings you to the video, showing the book:

http://www.bnf.fr/m/fr/m_anx_articles/a.c_110628_livre_dheures.html

