



MARGARET SARAH CARPENTER (1793-1872)

Miss Jane Blythe

Late 1830s/early 1840s

Oil on canvas

24 1/8 x 20 in. (61.3 x 50.8 cm)

Signed 'Margaret Carpenter' lower left

PROVENANCE

The family of the sitter, London;

A. Manson, Esq., London;

Newhouse Galleries, by 1964;[1]

Carol Dean Browning Dumke (1926–2023) and Edmund Wattis Dumke (1926–2019), acquired from the above, 6 August 1965;

Christie's, New York, 2 June 2026, lot 59;

Philip Mould & Company, London, acquired from the above.

LITERATURE

The Connoisseur: an Illustrated Magazine for Collectors. January 1964 (illus. as 'Miss Blythe');

The Connoisseur: an Illustrated Magazine for Collectors. May 1965.

PHILIP MOULD
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& COMPANY



Painted at the height of Margaret Carpenter's career, this exceptionally well-preserved portrait demonstrates why she was one of the most sought-after portraitists of early Victorian Britain.

The young sitter is shown with striking directness, her pale face framed by her exceptionally broad-brimmed hat, fashionably decorated with falling ribbons and a plume of feathers. The costume style suggests the painting dates to the late 1830s or early 1840s, though the flamboyant headdress notably departs from more conventional child portraiture of the period.

The artist delights in describing the textures of the clothing, with long, creamy white strokes to delineate the folds of the dress, counterbalanced by bright reds and greens that give the headwear a shimmering appearance. The landscape, too, is described with strong, naturalistic tones and painted briskly to suggest a warm summer's day. It is both a masterclass in colour and a study in capturing the demeanour of a young girl on the cusp of womanhood.

Critics deemed Carpenter superior to many of her male peers and often compared her to Thomas Lawrence. One contemporary journalist pointedly asked: '*How many of our male artists does Mrs. Carpenter put to the blush ever season?*'. [2] By the 1930s, Carpenter had established a remarkably broad clientele, and her success is evident in her extensive output. Her surviving payment book records more than six hundred names and, as Paris Spies-

Gans has observed, includes many influential figures of early Victorian society. [3] Richard Smith describes her clientele more expansively still: alongside '*Peers, Baronets, their Ladies and their children*' were '*the professionals and the merchants, and many quite ordinary people*' – in effect, '*almost a Who's Who of mid-19th century England*'. [4] Her portraits of children, which are painted with a distinct sensitivity, garnered the highest praise. [5]

The present sitter has long been identified as a Miss Jane Blythe, although the basis for this identification has not yet been established. Carpenter's account books, which are now in the National Portrait Gallery, London, do not list anyone by this family name settling payment for a portrait. It is possible, however, that the commission was paid for by a family relation or friend.

[1] *The Connoisseur: an Illustrated Magazine for Collectors*. January 1964 (illus. as 'Miss Blythe').

[2] *Naval & Military Gazette and Weekly Chronicle of the United Service*. 25 February 1837, p. 11.

[3] Paris A. Spies-Gans, (2022) *A Revolution on Canvas: The Rise of Women Artists in London and Paris, 1760-1830*. London: Paul Mellon Centre, p.165; "MSC – Margaret Sarah Carpenter, transcript of list of paintings 1812-1866" Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery, London.

[4] Richard J. Smith, (1993) "Margaret Carpenter (1793-1872): a Salisbury artist restored," *The Hatcher Review*, vol. 4, no. 36, pp. 13.

[5] *Ibid*, p.27