

2. CORNEILLE DE LYON (c.1500 – 1575)

Madeleine of France, later Queen Consort of Scotland (1520 – 1537)

Oil on panel: 5 ½ × 4 ⅝ in. (13.8 × 11.8 cm.)

With an old hand-written label from the 19th century (*verso*),
erroneously identifying the sitter as Renée of France, Duchess of Ferrara
Painted between September 1536 – May 1537

PROVENANCE

Private collection, France, from at least the mid-19th century, and very likely substantially longer, until 2019.

In association with Agnews Gallery

This newly discovered, unpublished and beautifully preserved portrait by Corneille de La Haye, called Corneille de Lyon, depicts Madeleine of France (1520 – 1537), the fifth child and third daughter of the French king, François I^{er} (1494 – 1547).¹ It was painted when the artist was at the height of his powers at the Valois court in Lyon, and is very likely a royal commission. At the time, the sixteen-year-old princess was being courted by James V of Scotland (1512 – 1542), becoming engaged and subsequently married to the twenty-four-year-old in January 1537. She had been painted some fourteen years earlier as a baby, by Jean Clouet, one of the greatest of all 16th century court artists, a painting formerly with The Weiss Gallery in 2007.

1. We are grateful to Professor Philippe Bordes and Dr. Alexandra Zvereva for their confirmation of the attribution.



JEAN CLOUET c.(1485 – 1541)
Madeleine of France (1520 – 1536)
© Private collection, UK, formerly with The Weiss Gallery



ACTUAL SIZE

The singular virtuosity with which Corneille has captured her sweet and somewhat wistful expression places this portrait amongst the most ravishingly beautiful and endearing of all Corneille's *oeuvre*. Its simplicity speaks of piety and devotion, while the diminutive scale – even smaller than is usual for this artist – accentuates the painting's jewel-like quality.

James V travelled to France in September 1536 to claim a French princess as his wife under the terms of the Treaty of Rouen which cemented the '*auld alliance*' between France and Scotland. James himself was painted by Corneille at this time, a portrait first with The Weiss Gallery in 1992. Although he was initially contracted and expected to marry Marie de Bourbon (1515 – 1538), a '*daughter of the Prince of the Blood*', once at the court in Lyon, James instead became infatuated with the French king's favourite, but sickly daughter, Princess Madeleine. The feeling was apparently mutual, and the young couple persuaded François I^{er} to break the contract with Marie de Bourbon, and give consent to their marriage. This he did reluctantly due to Madeleine's notoriously delicate health, for she was already suffering from tuberculosis.



STUDIO OF CORNEILLE DE LYON (c.1500 – 1575)
James V of Scotland (1512 – 1542), c.1536 – 37
 Private collection, formerly with The Weiss Gallery

2. Technical analysis by Silvia Amato 4.12.19, The Courtauld Institute of Art, ref. CIA2659.
 3. Inv. No.1994.67. See Anne Dubois de Groer, *Corneille de la Haye, dit Corenille de Lyon*, Paris, 1996, p.264., no.ADD.5 repr. as 'sitter unknown'. This *tondo* replica is known in two other versions, one sold at Christie's New York, 23 January 2004, lot 53, and the other at the Bibliothèque de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français, Paris. Other portraits of women from the 1520s–1530s in France show the same fashion for these sleeves – notably Corneille's portrait of *Anne Stuart*, c.1533–1536, (Bristol Museum & Art Gallery), and Jean Clouet's portrait of *Marguerite de Navarre*, c.1527, (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool).

The couple were married at Notre Dame on 1 January 1537, after which they waited till the milder weather of spring for their departure for Scotland. The young royals arrived in Leith on 19 May 1537, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the dating of our portrait. Madeleine's health was fast deteriorating, and tragically on 7 July 1537 she died at Holyroodhouse, reportedly in her new husband's arms, before she had even had an official coronation. Madeleine's reign was so short, that she became known as James's '*Summer Queen*', and pivotally, her death precipitated the British royal lineage we know today, providing us with a fascinating historical '*what if?*'. Had she lived to produce an heir, there would have been no Mary Queen of Scots, (daughter of James V by his second wife, Marie de Guise). Mary's son, James VI of Scotland and I of England, would not have been born or succeeded Elizabeth I to the English throne. Nor would his son Charles I have been born, and the Civil War and Cromwell's *Interregnum* might never have happened. There would have been no Caroline Restoration and the Hanoverians would never have succeeded to the English throne. Queen Victoria would never have reigned, and Queen Elizabeth II would not be here today.

Our hitherto unrecorded portrayal of the ill-fated princess is almost certainly Corneille's *ad vivum* original. Recent infra-red reflectography has revealed '*the presence of a freely applied underdrawing*', corroborating the spontaneity of a painting drawn from life.² Although Madeleine's iconography based on this portrait type was already known through several versions – some from the Corneille studio and others of a much later date – all are of varying and lesser quality than the present work. The closest is a *tondo* replica at the Fogg Art Museum, in which she wears an identical dress with Italianate sleeves of white silk emerging from slashed black velvet.³



STUDIO OF CORNEILLE DE LYON (c.1500 – 1575)

Madeleine of France

© Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum

An almost identical dress is worn by her sister-in-law, Catherine de' Medici (1519 – 1589), in a portrait by Corneille (now at Polesden Lacey, National Trust). That portrait is widely accepted as dating from 1536, the year that Catherine became Dauphine, and significantly, the same year as Madeleine's courtship with James V.⁴

In two other well-documented portraits of Madeleine, she is presented in an entirely different dress with ermine sleeves, appearing marginally older. One of these, clearly a studio replica, is housed at Versailles, and the other, previously at the Musée des Beaux Arts de Blois, was stolen and subsequently destroyed.⁵ It is possible that the use of ermine, often associated with the iconography of royalty, may reference Madeleine's subsequent married status as Queen.

4. We are grateful to Professor Aileen Ribeiro and Dr. Margaret Scott for corroborating the dating of this style of dress to 1536, and for suggesting that Corneille may well have worked on Catherine and Madeleine's portraits at the same time, deriving the dress from the same preparatory drawing

5. Anne Dubois de Groer, *ibid.*, pp.112–113, nos.11 & 11A.

6. Alexandra Zvereva has argued that our portrait represents Madeleine's younger sister Marguerite (1523–1574), however the iconography for Marguerite of France depicts a woman with an entirely different facial shape – long rather than oval, with a large nose similar to her father Francois I, and totally dissimilar to the iconography for Madeleine. If the portrait were of Marguerite, it would require our painting to date from the 1540s, at which point the fashion would be for a different sleeve than represented here, as discussed above.

7. We are grateful to Geoffrey Munn for his analysis of Madeleine's necklace.

8. The Versailles and Blois type likely provided the source for this portrayal of Madeleine amongst her family.



STUDIO OF CORNEILLE DE LYON (c.1500 – 1575)
Madeleine of France (1520 – 1536) c.1537

© Musée des Beaux-Arts, Blois

In all of Madeleine's iconography, the facial similarity to our portrait is clear, with its delicate oval shape and her petite nose.⁶ Likewise, in all of her portraits, she is depicted in the exact same head-dress and jewelled necklace, with distinct, lozenge-shaped diamonds interspersed with pearls and rubies. The small rubies, their size consistent with a virgin bride, are the alter ego of roses in the lore of lapidary, and both are primary attributes of Venus. The pearls represent purity and, like Venus, are born of the sea and the shell. Consequently, the jewels together are appropriate signs of Madeleine's enduring love for James V of Scotland.⁷ Madeleine is even depicted wearing the same necklace in the later miniature group portrait with her mother, Claude of France, and other kinswomen, forming part of Catherine de' Medici's *Livre d'Heures* (Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris), of c.1570s.⁸ In that exquisite illuminated manuscript, Madeleine is positioned top right amongst the women of her family, quite literally 'elevated' by her royal status as Queen consort of Scotland.



THE BOOK OF HOURS OF CATHERINE DE MEDICI, c.1570s
The daughters of François I with his wives Claude of France (1499 – 1524) and Eleanor of Austria (1498 – 1558)
 © Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Corneille de La Haye, called Corneille de Lyon was a Protestant Dutch *émigré* artist and one of the finest portrait painters of the French Renaissance. His art was strongly influenced by the tradition of the portrait miniature, following the lead of Jean Perréal (*b.* after 1450 – *d.* after 1530), and in this respect his work also shared an affinity with his near-exact contemporary in the French royal court, François Clouet (*c.* 1516 – 1572). Corneille above all achieved a delicate naturalism in his portraiture, executed with sensitivity and refinement. He arguably captured more humanity in his diminutive likenesses than any other portraitist of his time. All his works are bust- or half-length, lit dramatically from the side and usually set against a green background, as here. On this scale, Corneille conveys an intimate rapport, even though in our portrait of Madeleine, she averts her eyes with a degree of regal remove.

It is uncertain whether Corneille was apprenticed in his native city of The Hague, as nothing is known of him before 1533, when he was first recorded in the Valois court as painter to François I's second wife, Eleanor of Austria (1498 – 1558). In 1541, he was appointed official painter to the Dauphin (later Henri II (1519 – 1559)), and ultimately at Henri's succession became *Peintre du Roi*. Corneille's studio was extremely prosperous until *c.* 1565, and it may be that a decline in his fortunes was precipitated by the reversion of Lyon to Catholicism at that time. In 1569 the painter and his family, despite all the protection they could call on, were forced to recant. Nonetheless, the artist's sons, Corneille de La Haye II (*b.* 1543), Jacques de La Haye and his daughter Clémence de La Haye, were all painters, and the family continued to be active as artists until the 18th century.

