

= Streatham portrait =

The " Streatham " portrait is an oil painting on panel from the 1590s believed to be a later copy of a portrait of the English noblewoman Lady Jane Grey dating to her lifetime (1536 / 1537 ? 54) . It shows a three @-@ quarter @-@ length depiction of a young woman in Tudor @-@ period dress holding a prayer book , with the faded inscription " Lady Jayne " or " Lady layne " in the upper @-@ left corner . It is in poor condition and damaged , as if it has been attacked . Although of historical interest , it is generally considered to be of poor artistic quality . As of January 2015 the portrait is in Room 3 of the National Portrait Gallery in London .

The work is thought to have been completed as part of a set of paintings of Protestant martyrs . It was in the possession of a collector in Streatham , London , by the early 20th century . In December 2005 the portrait was examined by the art dealer Christopher Foley . He saw it as an accurate , though poorly executed , reproduction of a contemporary painting of Jane , had it verified and on that basis negotiated its sale . The work was acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in London for a rumoured £ 100 @,@ 000 . The historian David Starkey was highly critical of the sale and challenged Foley 's identifications .

= = Background = =

Lady Jane Grey was the great @-@ granddaughter of Henry VII through his youngest daughter Mary Tudor , and first cousin once removed to his grandson , King Edward VI . After Edward 's death , a Protestant faction proclaimed her queen over Henry VIII 's daughters , hoping to prevent the Catholic Mary Tudor from taking the throne . Two weeks after the death of her brother , Mary , with the support of the English people , claimed the throne , which Jane relinquished only nine days after being installed . She and her husband , Lord Guildford Dudley , were imprisoned in the Tower of London on charges of high treason . Jane 's trial was conducted in November , but her sentence of death was suspended . In February 1554 , Jane 's father Henry , who had been pardoned , participated in Wyatt 's rebellion . On 12 February , Mary had Jane , then aged 16 , and her husband beheaded ; Jane 's father suffered the same fate two days later .

Jane was a devout Protestant during the English Reformation , when the Church of England violently rejected the authority of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church . Known for her piety and education , she corresponded with Protestant leaders in Continental Europe , such as Heinrich Bullinger . A modest person who dressed plainly , her last words before her execution are reported as " Lord , into thy hands I commend my spirit ! " Jane 's execution by a Catholic queen made her into what the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography terms a " Protestant martyr " , and by the end of the century Jane had become , in the words of the historian Eric Ives , " a Protestant icon " . Depictions of Jane in the 16th and 17th centuries , such as in John Foxe 's Actes and Monuments (1563) , published after Protestant Elizabeth took the throne , " presented [Jane] as primarily a figure in a national narrative about an elect nation possessed of a pure Protestant faith which had risen supreme over Catholic Europe " .

Jane was long thought to be the only 16th @-@ century English monarch without a surviving contemporary portrait ; one was documented in a 1590 inventory , but is now considered lost . Some identified as her were later deemed to be of other sitters , such as one of Catherine Parr , the last of the six wives of King Henry VIII , which was identified as Lady Jane Grey until 1996 . Other works , such as The Execution of Lady Jane Grey (1833) by Paul Delaroche , were painted years or centuries after her death . As a result , Cynthia Zarin of The New Yorker writes , " the blank where [Jane 's] face should be has made it that much easier for succeeding generations to imprint their political and personal fantasies on her " .

= = Description = =

The three @-@ quarter @-@ length portrait measures 85 @.@ 6 cm × 60 @.@ 3 cm (33 @.@ 7 in × 23 @.@ 7 in) , and is painted with oil on Baltic oak . A faded inscription , reading " Lady Jayne "

or " Lady layne " , is in the upper @-@ left corner , above the woman 's shoulders . The sitter is described by art critic Charlotte Higgins as a slender and " demure , pious young woman " , and has been tentatively identified as Lady Jane Grey . Ives notes a familial resemblance between the sitter and Grey 's sisters , Catherine and Mary , which " may give conjectural support " to the identification of Grey .

The subject wears an opulent red gown with turned @-@ back trumpet sleeves and a partlet with standing collar ; the latter is embroidered with a fleur @-@ de @-@ lis pattern , the heraldic emblem of French royalty . The design on her underskirt shows a pattern variously identified as strawberries , gilliflowers , Scots thistles or pinks ; the last of these was an emblem of the Grey family . A French hood on her head covers most of her red hair . She wears numerous pieces of jewellery , including a necklace finished with medallions and pearls ; these indicate a person of high social and economic status , which is reinforced by the silk and velvet of her gown . The sitter is not , however , wearing a wedding ring , suggesting she was not yet married . Instead she is holding a prayer book . This type of costume was popular during the Tudor period , particularly in the 1550s , and the accuracy of its depiction has been used to advance the portrait 's authenticity as a depiction of Jane Grey .

The independent historian J. Stephan Edwards writes , however , that the fleur @-@ de @-@ lis give him pause as , before June 1553 , Jane " would have had no right to the French heraldic emblems " as she was not yet an heir to the throne . After the discovery of an inscribed portrait of Catherine Parr , in 2014 Edwards published a tentative identification of said painting as the original on which the Streatham portrait was based . He wrote that the Parr painting had been " adapted to ' become ' Jane Grey in the absence of an accessible authentic portrait " in the Streatham portrait and similar , supporting this with an analysis of the similar styles of dress and the jewellery (including a necklace of festooned pearls) .

Reception of the painting as a work of art has been predominantly negative . The historian David Starkey described it as an " appallingly bad picture " , a sentiment which the art dealer Christopher Foley echoed . Tarnya Cooper of the National Portrait Gallery gave less sharp criticism , stating " it 's a paint @-@ by @-@ number , labored copy " , and " its value is as a historical document rather than a work of art " . Zarin describes the painting as looking bleached in comparison with other portraits of monarchs , with " the flat face of a paper doll " . Edwards writes " the quality might be described as naive , primitive , or even folk art " .

= = History = =

= = = Production and early history = = =

The portrait is undated and unattributed . It is thought to have been completed in the 1590s , some forty years after Jane 's death , probably as a copy of a lost portrait contemporaneous with Jane ; dendrochronology dates the wood panel to c . 1593 .

Another strikingly similar portrait , depicting a woman also credited as Jane ? although the costume differs slightly ? was once owned by Richard Monckton Milnes , 1st Baron Houghton , but is now in an undisclosed private collection . Owing to similarities between the two works , Edwards suggests they are both copies of a lost original , perhaps completed by the same studio . A third copy , once owned by the English costume designer Herbert Norris , is known through records , although its whereabouts are unknown .

The Streatham portrait may have been part of a collection of Protestant martyr paintings . Damage to the painting 's mouth and eyes suggests that it was vandalised , possibly by a Catholic partisan ; as the seventeen scratches did not splinter the paint , this attack was probably not long after the portrait 's completion . Owing to the painting 's crudeness , Foley suggests that it was hurriedly completed for Jane 's family from an original that " had to be destroyed because it would have been too dangerous to own once Mary became queen " .

= = = Discovery = = =

The portrait was in the possession of a family in Streatham , London , by the 20th century . They had long believed the portrait was of Jane , and since 1923 had tried to convince others of its authenticity , without success . It was passed from generation to generation . In December 2005 , Sir John Guinness informed Foley of the family and their portrait . Foley visited the owner , hoping " to go shut the fellow up " , but upon seeing the work on an easel in their attic " knew it was right " for the period .

The identity of the sitter has been debated since the panel 's discovery . Foley has identified at least four Jane Greys among the English nobility at the time of the portrait . However , owing to " the ages and marital status of the other candidates " , Lady Jane Grey was the only viable choice ; the others were too young , already married and using a different surname , or had lost their title . Starkey was more reserved , arguing " there isn 't that over @-@ the @-@ top quality you get with royal portraits of the period , where the sitters look as though they 've just come back from Asprey " , and that there was no documentation of Jane owning the jewellery seen in the portrait .

After the discovery , Libby Sheldon of University College London conducted several tests to verify the painting 's age , including spectroscopy and laser microscopy . The age of the inscription was taken into consideration , and found to be contemporaneous with the rest of the painting . Pigments , including a type of yellow pigment rarely found after 1600 , were appropriate for the 16th century . Dendrochronological analysis later showed that the work was too late to be a life portrait of Jane , but did not rule out the possibility of reproduction .

= = = National Portrait Gallery = = =

The painting was purchased in 2006 by the National Portrait Gallery , London , with funds raised through their 150th anniversary gala , after more than nine months ' consideration . The cost was rumoured to be more than £ 100 @,@ 000 , though Zarin gives a price of £ 95 @,@ 000 . The acquisition was criticised by Starkey , who said , " if the National Portrait Gallery has public money to burn , then so be it ... [the decision] depends on mere hearsay and tradition , and it is not good enough " . Foley countered , " The evidence has been supported by people who know far more about the science of painting than David Starkey . I don 't know what his problem is ? is it because he didn 't find it ? " .

Privately Starkey acted on behalf of the Philip Mould Gallery and examined another portrait thought to be Jane , held by the Yale Center for British Art . This 2 @-@ centimetre (0 @.@ 79 in) miniature had been identified as Elizabeth I during a 1983 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum ; Starkey , however , was " 90 per cent certain " it depicted Jane . After the March 2007 exhibition Lost Faces , when the miniature was displayed after a recent resurgence of interest in Jane , Foley published a lengthy letter challenging Starkey 's judgement . He cited the sitter 's brooch and emblem as indicative that she was not Jane Grey .

The Streatham portrait bears the accession number of NPG 6804 and is considered part of the gallery 's primary collection . From January 2007 until early 2010 it was displayed in the Tudor Gallery . Beginning in early 2013 , the painting was hung in Room 2 of the gallery 's regional outpost at Montacute House in Somerset , part of an exhibition of Tudor @-@ era portraits .