

Inspiration from Kick@ss Tudor Women Day Five: Levina Teerlinc

Hello and Welcome Back! This is our final day together, sad face, but don't worry - the Facebook Group has been so popular, and there's been such a great response to this course, I'm going to keep doing stuff like this. In fact, stay tuned next week for a poll in the Facebook Group of me asking what type of minicourse you'd like to do next. So, happy face.

So let's recap the people we've talked about so far. Day One we started with the Mother of the Tudor Dynasty, Margaret Beaufort, who knew who she was, what she wanted, was both strong, and adaptable. Then we talked about Katherine Fenkyll, who again took advantage of an opportunity that came her way when her husband died, and, rather than leave the running of his business up to the men, she stepped up and took it on herself. Then we talked about the mystical prophetess Elizabeth Barton, who became delirious, had visions, and managed to speak truth to power in the form of telling Henry VIII he was making a huge mistake with trading in Catherine for a newer model. Finally, yesterday, we talked about Isabella Whitney, a down on her luck poet who wrote easy-to-understand poems for the public at a time when women did not do such things.

In addition to the fact that they moved about with confidence in a world that was meant to be solely a man's world, these women all were able to be smart and scrappy enough to seize opportunity when it came. No matter what circles they moved in, be it a poor servant, or a great heiress, these women all said yes when opportunity came their way. For some it worked out wonderfully - Margaret Beaufort's son founded a dynasty. For others, like Elizabeth Barton, it didn't work out so well. But they all a chance, and said yes.

Today's woman is someone who, if you've been looking at portraits of Tudors for any length of time, I promise you, you have seen something she did. She was an artist and the court painter, and she is famous for her miniatures. She is Levina Teerlinc, who moved with her husband to England, and rose through the ranks to paint the King, and nobility, and she served under four Tudor monarchs - all of them except Henry VII, the first.

Levina's father was a Flemish painter, and she had four sisters. She was born around 1510. Since her father didn't have a son, he trained her to paint, and she became an expert in miniatures. Miniatures were small portraits designed to be worn in a locket as jewelry. They were an intimate way to keep someone nearby. Ambassadors would carry miniatures of potential brides to each other, for example. To create a miniature took a lot of skill and patience, and the paintings have such detail that it's only when they are greatly magnified that you can see the tiny brushstrokes.

Her father was actually an illuminator, and he probably trained her to also create the manuscripts, but it took a very similar skillset to create a miniature as an illuminated manuscript, if you imagine the letters of a manuscript, you can imagine the similar kind of skill. So she took that skill and became a miniature portraitist.

One of her most famous Miniatures that of Katherine grey the sister to Lady Jane Grey, depicts not just Katherine and her son but also Catherine wearing a miniature portrait of her husband. This is an important painting on several levels. First, it was the first secular painting in England of a mother and son, and it was also the first one depicting a miniature being worn. So it was a miniature within a miniature, which showcased her skill level. It's

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actually difficult to attribute many of her works because she did not sign them. But she was the only Flemish miniature painter to be at the English court from the time she arrived in 1546 until her death, and she was the only miniaturist recorded between the death of Hans Holbein and the rise of Nicholas Hilliard.

Lavina was so skilled that in 1545 he was actually scouted by Henry the 8th and ask him to his court after Hans Holbein died. She came to England with her husband and was actually paid a higher starting salary than Hans Holbein have been made by 40 pounds. So we can imagine her skill level the popularity that she would have received the higher salary than Holbein.

She was instrumental in the spread and popularity of the miniature, and she was likely the author of, “A Very Proper Treatise Wherein is Briefly Set for the Art in Limning” (or painting miniatures) which was a how to book. It’s also the belief of several art historians that she taught Nicholas Hilliard, who would become the most famous miniaturist of the century.

There are documented works of hers that are paintings presented as gifts at New Year to the king, and an image of the Trinity for Mary I in 1553. She created numerous portraits of Elizabeth, both individual and within the court. One famous miniature, an Elizabethan Maundy, depicts probably close to 100 people. She also probably designed the Great Seal of England for Mary I and the earliest one used by Elizabeth in the 1540’s.

As I said, it’s difficult to attribute her work, and some scholars believe that many were lost in the fire at Whitehall in 1698. In 1983 the Victoria and Albert Museum had an exhibit that was the first occasion where miniatures had been presented that could be attributed to her.

She worked for every Tudor monarch until she died in 1576, and she did manage to have a child in there, so she was a mother as well as a career woman. Her career in England spanned 30 years, under 4 monarchs, and she was often paid better than the men she worked with.

There isn’t really that much more to say about her - she doesn’t appear in the records other than giving portraits as gifts, and receiving her salary, and we do know that she had a son, but beyond that, there’s not really much on her. It’s only been within recent decades that she’s been rediscovered, so scholars are still looking at her works, and discovering more about her, so that I’m sure that in the coming decades we will have a lot more information about her.

So this was kind of a short one, but I really wanted to talk about her, because she represents something that women still struggle with today - that’s being both a mother, and a working mama, and working creativity into your life. I don’t know what it was like for her privately, but it does seem that she was able to acheieve success in these areas, and she had a husband

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who supported her enough, and was confident enough in his own masculinity, to allow her to chase her dreams, and make more money than he did (something men still struggle with). So I think that she's a fascinating woman to know about, and study, and for that reason I wanted to bring her up.

So that's it!