

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM
FINE ARTS

JEAN-MARC NATTIER

Paris 1685 - id. 1766

French School

PORTRAIT OF MARIE ROSE LARLAN DE ROCHEFORT
MARQUISE DES NETUMIERES

Oil on canvas

H. 1,00 m; W. 0,81 m

Signed and dated middle right: *Nattier/Pinxit.1748*

DATE: 1748

PROVENANCE:

Lineage of the model, Comte de Legge, Bel-Air castle, Le Pertre (Ille et Vilaine)

Private collection, France

Jean-Marc Nattier was trained by his famous godfather Jean Jouvenet (1644-1717) in order to become a history painter. He attended life drawing classes at the French Royal Academy together with his elder brother Jean-Baptiste. In 1718, he became a member of the Academy as a history painter. Soon after, he dedicated himself entirely to portrait painting, although Paris counted many portraitists at that time, among whom, Nicolas de Largillière (1656-1746) and Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), still well known for their sumptuous portraits of the aristocrats and rich bourgeois in the beginning of Louis XV's reign. Nattier took up their tradition and then developed his own unmistakable style in the end of the 1730s: He associated nuances of blue, grey, green and pink, which he applied in fine and light brushstrokes giving the skin a blurred impression. The resemblance was evident although the female sitters looked more beautiful than they really were. According to the sitter's wishes, he did historical, allegorical or mythological portraits, showing the ladies for instance dressed as goddesses.

The Swedish ambassador in Paris, Carl Gustaf Tessin, stated in 1741 that it was very difficult to obtain a portrait by the famous Nattier, cherished by the French society. In the 1740s, Nattier became the royal family's favourite painter. He painted the King's four daughters, Mesdames de France, and of course, Marie Leszczyńska, Queen of France (1748, musée de Versailles).

When Nattier painted this portrait, he was at top of his career. It is a classical straight forward portrait without any allegorical or mythological dimension. He used the traditional velvet curtain and base of a column, inherited from Antony Van Dyck's portraiture. The fine treatment of the various kinds of fabrics and the sensitive and very vivid expression of the sitter make this portrait a masterpiece.

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Marie-Françoise-Rose de Larlan de Kercadio (ca.1717-1787), lady of Rochefort, marquise de Nétumières was a known beauty at her time. In a travel account of the mid-nineteenth century she is quoted to be one of the most beautiful ladies of Brittany¹.

Her husband, the marquis de Nétumières, was related to the Sévigné family. The marquise de Sévigné (1629-1696) was known for her rich correspondence that gave insight to the society of the seventeenth century. She used to live at *Les Rochers*, a manor house near Vitré in Brittany before she moved to Paris. In the eighteenth century this manor house was then occupied by the marquis de Nétumières and Marie-Françoise-Rose de Larlan who was then compared to the famous marquise de Sévigné. In Louis Dubois's book on *Les Rochers*², he wrote a poem glorifying her intelligence, charm and beauty. He wrote how she embellished the manor house and that her gracefulness recalled the celebrated Madame de Sévigné:

A madame la marquise de Nétumières

*Vous qui réunissez esprit, charme, beauté ;
Vous qui n'affectez pas la sensibilité ;
Qui parez des Rochers l'élégant ermitage,
Son par si gracieux, son château si vanté,
Où tout retrace encore à notre œil enchanté
L'âme de Sévigné, ses travaux, son passage,
Daignez avec bonté recevoir mon ouvrage.
Il est bien sérieux, je n'ose le nier,
Et je crains qu'en lisant ces Recherches Nouvelles
Vous ne me compariez au grave douanier,
Chargeant d'un plomb pesant de légères dentelles ;
Mais l'indulgence est propre à votre esprit bien né ;
Mais mon hommage est dû, comme il est décerné,
A celle qui de fleurs semant aussi ses traces,
De notre illustre Sévigné
Embellit le séjour et rappelle les grâces.³*

¹ Marie-Caroline-Rosalie de Monmerqué, *Tablettes de voyage (...)*, 1851, p. 34.

² Louis Dubois, *Recherches Nouvelles*, Vitré, s.d. [1751].

³ Cited in : M.-C.-R. de Monmerqué, *Tablettes de voyage (...)*, 1851, p. 35.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM FINE ARTS



Manor house of *Les Rochers* near Vitré in Brittany

She married into one of the oldest families of that province in Brittany, a gentleman named Charles-Paul Hay, marquis des Nétumières et du Chastelet, vicomte du Besso, seigneur du Catuélan et des Rochers (1712-1762). The marriage took place on June 23rd 1735. She gave birth to three sons and three daughters. Her oldest son Marie-Paul was born on January 30th 1753. Jean-Paul-Elisabeth-Exupère, the second born, died young, and Marie-Charles Hay was born on August 8th 1758. However, we have no dates concerning her daughters' birth. We are aware that two died in the cradle and that the name of the third was Françoise-Julie-Pauline.⁴

When Nattier painted this portrait in 1748, the marquise des Nétumières was approximately 30 years old. Her two sisters, Jeanne and Thérèse, were born in 1720 and 1722. Her father Julien de Larlan, baron de Rochefort died in 1722. We can assume that her brother Jean-Anne-Vincent and herself were born between 1715 and 1720.

⁴ *Annuaire de la noblesse de France et des maisons souveraines de l'Europe (...)*, Paris, 1896, p. 303-305.

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In 1750, the marquise des Nétumières was painted by Jean-Etienne Liotard (1702-1789), famous Swiss pastellist who worked in Paris. Her portrait⁵ was done in Paris, when the marquise visited his studio. In 1962 this portrait was bought by the Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan.



A miniature portrait of the marquise des Nétumières is still with a member of the family. The sitter's head is quite close to the portrait by Nattier which might have served as a model. The miniature bears an inscription on its back: "M^{me} La M^{ise} / Hay des Nétumières / née Larlan de Rochefort / Mère de M. Le C^{te} Des / Nétumières père de M^{me} / La C^{tesse} Georges de Ferron / et G^d père de M^{me} / Charles Henry Hersart / du Buron." This miniature belonged apparently to her third son, Marie-Charles Hay comte des Nétumières (1758-1839).



⁵ Renée Loche, Marcel Roethlisberger, *L'opera completa di Liotard*, Milan, 1978, no. 120 : 'Marie-Rose de Larlan de Kercadio de Rochefort, marquise de Nétumières', pastel on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, signed and dated 'Liotard 1750', Detroit Institute of Arts.