



Portrait of Tulcee (Julcee) Mathla, A Seminole Chief

Date

1826

Primary Maker

Charles Bird King

Medium

oil on panel

Description

Although Charles Bird King never visited a Native American village, he painted more portraits from life of North American Indians than almost any other artist of his time. Living and working in Washington, D.C., he was able to capture the likeness of members of the various delegations of Indian tribes who visited the Capitol during

a period of government negotiation of Indian lands and rights. King was encouraged in this endeavor by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which sought, in this pre-camera era, to preserve a visual record of what it believed might be vanishing peoples. While he was never renowned for great technical achievement, King received critical attention for faithfully recording physical features and tribal costumes. Trained in the United States and London, he studied for some time with Benjamin West (1738-1820). His skill as a sensitive portraitist is evident in this dignified and fascinating portrait of the Seminole chief Julcee Mathla. Although a large number of King's original paintings were destroyed in an 1865 fire that ravaged the Smithsonian Institution's art collection, many survive in his own replicas as well as through painted copies and lithographs made by other artists after King's originals.

Dimensions

Sight: 16 1/2 × 13 1/2 in. (41.9 × 34.3 cm) Framed: 29 1/4 × 25 1/2 × 2 1/2 in. (74.3 × 64.8 × 6.4 cm)