FAITH IN ART:
JUSTUS ENDELHARDT KUHN’S PORTRAIT OF ELEANOR DARNALL

A Thesis
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By

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The first known portraitist in the southern colonies was Justus Engelhardt Kuhn (d. 1717), a German immigrant whose early work included pendant portraits of Eleanor Darnall (1704-1796) and her older brother, Henry (1702-1788?), as children. These full-length, ambitious and expensive paintings contain intriguing iconographic details that make them stylistically and visually different from paintings commissioned in the northern colonies. Some scholarly attention has been devoted to one aspect of the painting of Henry because of the inclusion of a slave in his portrait, though little attention has been paid to the equally complex and alluring portrait of Eleanor. No more than sixteen extant works by Kuhn are known, all painted between 1708 and 1717.

An interdisciplinary approach is used to identify the sitter in this portrait and investigate the painting’s artistic and cultural aspects by exploring Colonial portraiture conventions, religious iconography, and Maryland history and law. In addition to reading scholarly articles and books on the subject, research for this thesis included interviews with scholars, curators and historians in the fields of American portraiture and Maryland Catholic history. Primary source material provided invaluable context for understanding this portrait.
This thesis offers a multi-dimensional analysis of the portrait of Eleanor Darnall, who became the mother of John Carroll, the first American Catholic archbishop and the founder of Georgetown University. Kuhn drew on a variety of traditions to convey the culture and values of his only known portrait clients, the prominent Carroll, Digges and Darnall families, during a time of fluctuating tolerance for Catholics in the American colonies. Though only a few scholars have given Kuhn’s body of work serious attention, this thesis will argue that the artist offers significant insight into the social, cultural, and religious values of his prominent clients through the portraits he created. This paper contends that the portrait not only preserved the image of the sitter and confirmed the family’s wealth and status, but that it also symbolized the family’s political allegiance, provided a means of social mobility for the artist, and served to document the family’s Catholic faith through its multiple layers of iconography.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COPYRIGHT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE READING THE IMAGE:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO WAS ELEANOR DARNALL?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO THE PORTRAIT IN ITS ARTISTIC CONTEXT</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE THE PORTRAIT IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR JUSTUS ENGELHARDT KUHN</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX ONE</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX TWO</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IMAGE ONE 19
PORTRAIT OF ELEANOR DARNALL, 1710
    BY JUSTUS ENGELHARDT KUHN

IMAGE TWO 50
THE THREE ELDEST CHILDREN OF CHARLES I, 1635
    BY ANTHONY VAN DYCK
CHAPTER ONE

READING THE IMAGE: WHO WAS ELEANOR DARNALL?

What can be learned from a tantalizing portrait of a young girl and a dog? The painting is highly unusual among works of art from the early years of colonial Maryland. Neither the portrait [see Image One] nor its sitter, Eleanor Darnall (1703/4-1796) has received much scholarly attention. By first examining its provenance and the limitations of existing scholarship concerning this ambitious painting, the reader can then consider the Darnall family’s rise to prominence in colonial Maryland as well as the importance of Eleanor’s education abroad. Placing this information in context allows a more complete opportunity to understand and interpret the portrait in its artistic and cultural settings.

The Portrait

The large (54” x 44”) oil portrait on canvas is ambitious in its size and format. The full-length likeness of Eleanor Darnall at the approximate age of six shows her standing in a nearly full frontal position with her dark brown eyes looking to the viewer’s right. Her prominent red lips are closed and her cheeks are flushed. She wears a single strand of pearls at her neck, with her light brown hair tied back in a pink ribbon. Her pink dress is partially covered by a white lace apron in front and a dark blue cape in back. A layer of blue is visible between her pink dress and the ruffled white lace sleeves at each wrist. On the left of the portrait sits a white and brown spaniel, whose
head is touched rather awkwardly by the fingers of Eleanor’s right hand, while she appears to point in the direction of the dog with her left hand. The dog, Eleanor, and the cape form a strong triangular center to the portrait. A dark curtain is pulled back on the left of the canvas, held in place by ivy that encircles a stone column.

Eleanor is shown standing on a bluish-green and white tiled floor in front of a balustrade that ends in a cornerstone pedestal on the far right side of the painting. The pedestal base includes a carving of an unusually large male face, which stares out directly at the viewer and is completely encircled by curly hair and framed by four spandrels. Atop the pedestal rests a large, two-handled gold and silver urn filled with at least seven different varieties of flowers and assorted greenery. The ornate urn is decorated with a head similar to the larger one on the pedestal below. A pale pink rose in full bloom is visible to the left of the urn, while a darker pink rose appears to the right of the urn; both flowers appear to float slightly above the balustrade.

The fanciful background of the portrait includes two rows of poplar trees receding to the left, creating deep perspective. The rows of trees end near an elaborate stone building, which is topped by a yellow pennant on a turreted flagpole. The trees are partially surrounded by a stone wall with intricate railings on the upper level. Smaller trees are planted in orb-like containers atop the railing. A fountain flows in the left middle ground of the portrait, inside an enclosed garden. The fountain is decorated on each side of its base with grotesques spouting water from their mouths. A statue of a soldier facing the fountain is situated on the front corner of the railing overlooking paths.
and grounds of dirt or gravel. Shadows indicate an unseen light source above and slightly to the left of the painting’s center. The sky is painted in nondescript grays and browns. These elaborate details are unique, raising intriguing questions about the artist, the sitter, and the meaning of this portrait.

The painting is unsigned; no identifying marks were found on the back of the canvas when it was last removed from its original frame for cleaning and conservation in 1999-2000. Maryland Historical Society (MDHS) records include a notation that an additional strip of canvas was added to the left side of the canvas, most probably prior to painting. Notes show that early eighteenth-century canvases came to the colonies in one width, and that artists requiring a larger, non-standard size would have had to order a canvas strip patched along one or more sides.¹

According to Maryland scholar, Dr. J. Hall Pleasants, “The frames of all ten of these Kuhn paintings [in the Maryland Historical Society collection and the personal collection of Phillip Carroll, a direct descendant of Eleanor Darnall Carroll] are unquestionably original and contemporary, and, as was the custom of the time, were doubtless furnished by the artist himself to his patrons.”² The two large paintings of Eleanor and Henry Darnall by Kuhn have similarly elaborate frames.

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¹ Eugenia Calvert Holland, Assistant Curator at MDHS, to Edmund Nielson at the Milwaukee Arts Center, April 18, 1966, Portrait Gallery Record, Eleanor Darnall file, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

The Provenance

The portrait of Eleanor Darnall was given to the Maryland Historical Society by Ellen C. Daingerfield in 1912. Miss Daingerfield was a direct descendent of the sitter’s brother, through whose family this portrait passed for 200 years. The early history of the painting is not documented, though it was known to have hung for generations at Poplar Hill, the Darnall family home near what is now Andrews Air Force Base in Prince George’s County, Maryland. Its likely provenance is from Eleanor’s brother, Henry Darnall, III, of Poplar Hill, to his daughter, Mary Darnall Sewell of Eltonhead Manor, to her son, Robert Sewell of Poplar Hill, to his daughter Susan Sewell Daingerfield of Poplar Hill, to her daughter Ellen C. Daingerfield of Poplar Hill, to the Maryland Historical Society.3

Previous Scholarship

The painting was created circa 1710, approximately the same time as the portrait made of her older brother, Henry Darnall, III (age 8).4 The portrait of Henry has been the subject of some scholarly work because it is thought to be the first colonial portrait that includes a slave. Eleanor and Henry are the only two Darnall children known to

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survive past infancy. Between 1710 and 1712, Kuhn also painted individual portraits of Charles Carroll of Annapolis (age 10) and Ignatius Digges (age 2 1/2), both of whom were cousins of the Darnall children. The portraits are all similar in size, format, and iconographic detail. An exclusive focus on Eleanor’s portrait is warranted, given that, of the four portraits, this one is the least explored in scholarly terms. There are very few extant portraits of children from this time period, and fewer still of a single girl. By comparing the painting of Eleanor with several New England portraits of individual children, it is easier to recognize and appreciate the uniqueness of Kuhn’s portrait.

Some scholarly work suggests that the two likenesses of the Darnall siblings may have been created as pendants. Pendant portraits “consist of two pictures that are compositionally and iconographically related as a pair but are not attached to each other. They hang side by side, but separately and autonomously, each on its own nail….” In the case of married couples in Dutch seventeenth-century portraiture, the man is generally shown on the viewer’s left and the woman on the viewer’s right, often in three-quarter length poses, both turned slightly toward one another, while still

5 Mention is made of another Darnall sibling in the 1711 will of their grandfather, Colonel Henry Darnall: “To grandson John (Darnall), 2nd son of son Henry and hrs., dwelling place, 1000 A., Portland Manor in A, A, Co., at decease of wife.” No further mention is made of this John Darnall in any record researched for this paper, so it is possible that he did not survive to inherit. A fourth Darnall child, Mary, is listed in a genealogy of Charles Carroll but mentioned nowhere else in records found for this paper.


looking directly at the viewer. Individual portraits of children were far less common than those of adults in early colonial American history, though it is not improbable to suggest that the same formula regarding hanging and display might be applied to portraits of siblings, particularly when both a boy and a girl are represented. The Maryland Historical Society displays the portrait of Henry on the left and that of Eleanor on the right, an arrangement that follows this tradition.

When these portraits were donated to the Maryland Historical Society in 1912, their positions in the front hall of Poplar Hill were noted on two roughly drawn (conflicting) diagrams: one shows Eleanor’s portrait hanging on the left, Henry’s portrait on the right, and a portrait of “Arthur” in the center; the other diagram shows “girl with dog, sister of Henry Darnall” hung between “Mrs. Talbot, sister of Henry who is in buff and red” on the right and “Boy in buff and red, Henry” on the left. The oldest and most prized paintings in a family’s collection were often displayed in the most formal public room on the main floor of the house, whether in castles of royalty in Britain or more modest homes in colonial America. That may have been the entrance hall, the parlor, or in the case of smaller homes, the dining room.

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8 For a fuller discussion, see http://www.steigrad.com/cat/vandervoort01.html, accessed June 8, 2008.


10 Robert F. Hayes, Jr. to L. H. Dielman, July 25, 1918, File of Eleanor Darnall, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland.

Neither the portrait of Eleanor nor that of Henry is signed by the artist, Justus Engelhardt Kuhn (d. 1717), though he did sign a remarkably similar portrait of their cousin, Ignatius Digges (1707-1785). The inscription on the Digges portrait is painted on the rail of the balustrade in old German script: “Anno Aetatis suae 2 ½ 1710 E. Kuhn Fecit.”\(^\text{12}\) The Digges portrait is considered the key painting in Kuhn’s body of work, and similarities in the frames, the canvases, and the manner of painting are used to confirm that Kuhn painted all three portraits.

The first study of Kuhn’s extant paintings was undertaken by J. Hall Pleasants (1873-1957), a Baltimore physician and philanthropist who served on the board of the Baltimore Museum of Art. He researched paintings important to the history of Maryland and published a monograph on Justus Engelhardt Kuhn in 1937. Pleasants served as corresponding secretary and vice president of the Maryland Historical Society.

Much information that would shed light on the artist and the portrait is missing or lost, including the naturalization papers of Kuhn from 1708. Although extant court documents include the legislative record of Kuhn’s petition for naturalization, the now lost application documents he would have had to complete would have contained some demographic data. He is identified in the records of the December, 1708, Maryland Assembly as a German, Protestant, and a painter. No indication of his birth date or city of origin remains. He left behind no journal that would tell us of a possible

\(^{12}\) Pleasants, Justus Engelhardt Kuhn: An Early Eighteenth Century Maryland Portrait Painter, 26.
apprenticeship in England that has been conjectured, the approximate twelve-week journey by boat to the New World, or his decision to set up his workshop in Maryland. An inventory of his estate at his death in 1717 reveals some intriguing, though incomplete, details that will be discussed later.

**Background of the Darnall Family**

In 1623, King James (1566-1625), of the House of Stuart, rewarded George Calvert (c.1580-1632), a loyal clerk of the Privy Council and advisor to the king, by knighting Calvert and granting him twenty-three hundred acres in County Longford, Ireland. It was there that he built his home, the Manor of Baltimore. After leaving the court, and being an adventurer, Calvert attempted to settle Englishmen in the New World on the shores of Newfoundland, where he had been granted a land patent. Calvert named this land “Avalon,” a reference to the mythical island where Christianity first entered Britain. The attempt at colonization was a disaster due to the extremely cold weather. Calvert asked James’ successor, Charles I (1600-1649), for another grant, but died before the final charter was signed. That second grant was given in 1634 to George Calvert’s oldest son, Cecil (1605-1675), for a colony named in honor of Henrietta Maria (1609-1666), queen of Charles I and daughter of Henry IV and Maria de Medici of France. The charter gave the Calverts power in perpetuity to issue grants of land, make laws, assign honors, and serve as proprietary governor of “Mary Land.”

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The province of Maryland grew under the proprietorships of two Lords Baltimore: Cecil (1605-1675), and Charles (1637-1715). Charles was the only one to ever live in Maryland, though he returned to England in 1684 to argue a land dispute with William Penn. In 1689, the capital of Maryland was moved from St. Mary’s City in southern Maryland approximately seventy miles north to Anne Arundel Town. The town was later renamed Annapolis after Princess Anne (1665-1714), who became heir apparent upon the death of her sister, Queen Mary, in December, 1694. St. Mary’s City had been a Catholic stronghold from the time of its founding in 1632, when Jesuit Father Andrew White led Calvert’s first group of settlers to the new colony aboard The Ark and The Dove. Annapolis, by contrast, was originally settled by Puritans in 1649 and named Providence. During the late seventeenth century, the land in and around present-day Annapolis was used for raising corn, tobacco, and cattle, for shipbuilding, and for its valuable location as a port of entry.\textsuperscript{14}

The story of Eleanor’s grandfather, Colonel Henry Darnall (1645-1711), provides insight into the early history of Maryland. He was born in England to Mary and Phillip Darnall, the latter of whom served as secretary to the first Lord Baltimore. Colonel Darnall came to St. Mary’s City in 1672, the year after the birth of his first son, Philip. There is no record of his first wife’s name or date of death, so it is possible she died giving birth or en route to America, leaving him both a widower and a single parent. His second marriage to Eleanor Hatton Brooke took place in Maryland some

\textsuperscript{14} Anthony Lindauer, \textit{From Paths to Plats: The Development of Annapolis, 1651 to 1718}, (Annapolis: The Maryland State Archives and The Maryland Historical Trust, 1997), 1-23.
time between 1676 (the year her first husband died) and 1678, when Henry and Eleanor’s first child, Mary Darnall, was born. Mary became the wife of Charles Carroll (the Settler), and their descendents intermarried with the Darnall and Digges families to form a tight clan of wealthy, Catholic landowners who dominated the early history of Maryland. The Colonel had three more children with his second wife: Ann (1680-1749), Henry, II (1682-1759), who became the father of the subject of this portrait, and Elizabeth (b.? – 1704).

Colonel Darnall served as a member of the Governor’s Council from 1679 to 1689 and as deputy governor of the province from 1684 to 1689. Nearly all public offices in colonial Maryland were given to Catholic supporters of Lord Baltimore, who also held the exclusive right to all land within the boundaries of the province. In 1688, the year before the “Glorious Revolution,” which revoked all rights and privileges given to Catholics in the American colonies, Colonel Darnall received a land grant from Lord Calvert for "The Girls’ Portion." This land encompassed all of what is now downtown Silver Spring south of Colesville Road, the northern part of Takoma Park, and parts of the District of Columbia. At his death, Darnall owned more than 27,000 acres, making him the largest landowner in Maryland (after the Lords Baltimore) and contributing to his reputation as the most powerful Catholic in colonial America.

In 1684, John Darnall, the Colonel’s brother, died in nearby Calvert County. The Colonel’s son, Philip, died in 1705 at the age of 34, leaving four children
Colonel Darnall witnessed the deaths of his first wife, his brother, two of his own adult children, and at least five grandchildren by his daughter, Mary, before 1705. It must have taken a great toll on Colonel Darnall to see so many loved ones die young. He faced these deaths at the same time that the Protestant Revolution was underway, which caused him to lose important positions and sources of revenue in Maryland.

The Darnalls had been a prominent family in St. Mary’s City during its tenure as capital of Maryland. By moving to his new home, the Woodyard, constructed in 1692, Col. Darnall would have been about twenty miles from the seat of the government. The Woodyard adjoined the lands of his relatives, the Digges family in Melwood and the Carroll family in Upper Marlboro. All the properties were near the Patuxent River, which provided valuable access to the Chesapeake Bay. Importantly, these families were also neighbors of the third Lord Baltimore, Charles Calvert, who had maintained a hunting lodge at Mount Airy since 1660. Charles Calvert’s first wife was Mary Darnall (died c. 1667), a first cousin of Colonel Darnall. Charles Calvert took as his second wife Jane Lowe Sewall, whose daughter from a previous marriage, Elizabeth Wharton Sewall, married William Digges (c. 1650-1697). Elizabeth and William Digges were the parents of Ann Digges (1685-liv. 1750), who married Henry Darnall, II, and became the mother of Eleanor Darnall. That chain of marriages resulted in the third Lord

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Baltimore being related by marriage twice to Colonel Darnall, further deepening the bonds between the two families.

In 1703, Henry Darnall, II, received a patent for 7,000 additional acres from Charles Calvert, third Lord Baltimore. Darnall named the property His Lordship’s Kindness, Poplar Hill. The Darnall family now owned approximately ten percent of the land in Prince George’s County. Henry Darnall II held many offices, including Proprietary Agent and Receiver General, two of the most lucrative positions in the provincial government of Maryland.

Henry III and Eleanor spent their early childhood years at the Woodyard, the family estate that stood at the intersection of Woodyard and Rosaryville Roads in Prince George’s County, Maryland, and which was sold in 1728 by Henry Darnall II to pay debts. It is believed that the pendant portraits of Henry and Eleanor originally hung at the Woodyard and ultimately were moved to Poplar Hill, where they remained until their donation to the Maryland Historical Society.

**Education Abroad**

Eleanor Darnall was one of the few women in colonial America to receive a formal education, which was obtained at the convent school of the Sepulchrine nuns, 17

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16 The original Woodyard house was destroyed and the land divided into parcels that now hold numerous single-family homes. See John Martin Hammond, *Colonial Mansions of Maryland and Delaware*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1914).

founded in Liège in 1642. Understanding more about her experience abroad sheds light on the expectations of a Catholic girl born to such a well-established family. These convent schools were begun in the seventeenth century as a way of schooling girls from exiled English Catholic families during the Reformation. Girls as young as four years old were accepted into the convent schools with accompanying dowries to pay expenses, in addition to the annual tuition of twenty to one-hundred British pounds. Typically, instruction included writing, reading, French, music, and needlework; interestingly, girls were also responsible for praying for the reinstatement of the Catholic Church in England. English Catholics recognized the importance of instilling firm Catholic principles in their daughters, who would pass the faith on to the next generation. Therefore, the convents were seen to perform a vital religious function, and parents were willing to support them financially.

The children of the Digges-Darnall-Carroll families received educations intended to prepare them for their life’s roles, expectations for which were grand. European institutions were founded in the seventeenth century to educate the children of wealthy Catholic families whose rights were denied. The tradition of sending children away at young ages existed in the early years of the clan’s presence in Maryland, though it is unknown whether the generation of girls before Eleanor went abroad for

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18 Magdalene Roskell (CRSS archivist) and Rebecca Volk, August 7, 2008, email response to author.

their studies. From 1658 to 1678 religious liberties were partially restored, raising the question whether it was possible to provide a private Catholic tutor in Maryland for the children of the extended family while laws were enacted and then retracted. Colonel Darnall’s daughter, Mary Darnall (1678-1742), married Charles Carroll (the Settler) c. 1695 when she was fifteen years old. Perhaps a propitious marriage was chosen for Eleanor’s aunt in lieu of an education abroad, particularly because the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 may have interrupted plans for such an expensive journey at a time fraught with danger. Henry Carroll (1697/8-1719) studied at St. Omer, the Jesuit college in France, from at least 1713 to 1716.20 Charles Carroll of Carrollton (Signer of the Declaration of Independence) was sent with Eleanor’s son, John Carroll (first Catholic Bishop in America), to the Jesuit-run Bohemia Manor Academy on the Eastern shore of Maryland when the boys were ten and twelve years old, respectively, in preparation for being sent abroad to St. Omer the following year.21

The account books of the Canonesses Regular of the Holy Sepulchre in Liège first mention ‘scollers’ in 1651, though it is hard to determine how many girls attended as there is little distinction made between scholars and other lodgers housed in the convent. Unfortunately, many convent documents from the seventeenth century were

21 Hammond. Colonial Mansions of Maryland, 118.
destroyed or lost, so there is no way to verify when Eleanor first arrived in Liège.

Records show the following payments included in a transcript of their account books:  

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<tr>
<td>Receiu’d for Pentions since the 13 of April 1722</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two half years for the two Miss Darnells due No. 1722</td>
<td>666 florins 13 pence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two half year pentions for 2 Miss Darnells</td>
<td>666 florins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentions since the 5 of April 1723</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Mr. Darnell</td>
<td>33 florins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One half year for the two Miss Carals</td>
<td>333 florins 6 pence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the two Miss Darnels</td>
<td>416 florins 16 pence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of Eleanor Darnall’s cousins joined her for their education in Liège: Mary (1711-1739) and Eleanor (1712-1730) Carroll, daughters of Charles Carroll the Settler (1661-1720) and Mary Darnall (1678-1742), sister of Eleanor’s father, Henry Darnall, II. Shortly after Charles Carroll the Settler died, the records at Liège note that Henry Darnall paid the Carroll girls’ tuitions for 1723-24.

A 1650 engraving by Matthäus Merian of the city of Liège, where the convent was located, shows architecture consistent with that of the building painted in the distance in the portrait of Eleanor. In the years 1642-1654, Merian’s work was published in a popular 21-volume series of town plans and maps known as the Topographia Germaniae that was widely available through several editions. It is possible that Kuhn had access to this or other similar seventeenth-century European


prints that would allow him to copy such an image into the portrait. The convent was located near the present-day intersection of Rue Saint Gilles and Boulevard d’Avroy, adjacent to St. Christopher’s Church. Mary Christina Dennett, who was professed in Liège in 1749, built up the convent school at Liège, overseeing an enlargement of the school in 1770. She is said to have “set her heart on giving Catholic girls the same advantages which they would have had in the great schools in England.” The building was a former hospital associated with St. Christopher’s Church, established c. 1170 by Lambert le Begue, a priest of Liège, who had devoted his fortune to founding the hospital and church of St. Christopher for the widows and children of crusaders. An inscription on the lintel of the cathedral portal describes Liège as “daughter of the Roman Church.”

An examination of the philosophy of the Sepulchrine nuns who taught Eleanor reveals aspects of her education that are central to reading the portrait. The convent was established to follow the order of Augustine, which includes adhering to a life of sanctitatem et clericatum: living in community with others and following the examples of the Apostles, who reached out beyond their community to teach, preach, and administer the sacraments, even in the face of danger. These nuns lived by the rule of Augustine in their mission to teach the Catholic faith to those who were denied such an education in their own land, ensuring that new generations of Catholics would continue

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25 Magdalene Roskell (CRSS archivist) and Rebecca Volk, email correspondence initiated August 6, 2008.

as soldiers of Christ. The tower, enclosed garden, and soldier in the background of Eleanor’s portrait could be read as an illustration of an Augustinian prayer: “As a lofty tower surrounded on all sides by walls makes the soldiers who garrison it safe, fearless, and impregnable, so the rule of Blessed Augustine, fortified on all sides by observances in accordance with it, makes its soldiers, that is, Canons Regular, undismayed at the attacks, safe and invincible.”

Conclusion

One possible explanation for the commissioning of this portrait is that it was painted at the time Eleanor was being sent abroad for her formal education, and that the image of the enclosed tower could represent not so much the physical building in Liège, but rather the Catholic faith that would be strengthened by years of education there. Perhaps she is pointing not to the dog but rather to the ground below the balcony on which she stands, indicating the path she is about to traverse behind her to that “lofty tower.” Eleanor was about to embark on a very real journey away from the struggle for religious and political freedom in Maryland and toward a closed environment in which her faith could flourish. Her portrait may have been commissioned to remind family members left behind in Maryland that Eleanor was being sent to fulfill her duties as a Catholic and future wife and mother within this prominent family.

Eleanor married Daniel Carroll in 1727 or 1728 and moved first to Upper Marlboro, then to his estate at Doughoregan Manor in Carroll County. Their children who survived infancy were: Henry (b. 1728), Daniel (b. 1730), Anne (b. 1733), John (b. 1736), Eleanor (b. 1737), Mary (b. 1742) and Elizabeth (b. 1745). Eleanor’s son, John Carroll, would go on to become the first Catholic bishop in America, a position he could never have attained without the firm foundation afforded him by his unusually well educated and devoutly Catholic mother. By understanding the history of Eleanor Darnall’s prominent family, the reader is now better positioned to recognize and interpret the portrait’s artistic and cultural content.

Image One
Justus Englehardt Kuhn (d. 1717)
Eleanor Darnall c. 1710
Oil on canvas, 54 1/64 x 44 1/64 in. (137.2 x 111.8 cm.)
Bequest of Ellen C. Daingerfield
Accession: 1912-1-5
Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society
A painter trained at the end of the seventeenth century drew on centuries of tradition to do much more than record a physical description of his sitter. The inclusion of family values and social status, often recorded by “quoting” the works of great masters and incorporating iconic images from the sitter’s culture, was equally important. The size of the portrait, the style of painting, the iconography used, the location designated for its hanging, and the intended viewers would all be taken into account as the painter created his work. The price of the portrait was carefully negotiated to reflect the experience and status of the artist, the social standing of the family, and the difficulty of the painting.

To better understand Justus Engelhardt Kuhn’s portrait of Eleanor Darnall, we must, therefore, begin by understanding the expectations of the sitter and the artist, and what each hoped to gain by the successful completion of this product.

According to Dr. Ellen Miles, children’s portraits in the early eighteenth century were celebrations of family, satisfying social needs and often intended as a form of flattery. That flattery could be as simple as improving the physical appearance of the sitter, though more often than not, artists referenced the family’s economic and social standing, political allegiances, or values through the details of clothing, background, and other attributes. Portraits were intended as personal markers of a family’s lineage,

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1 Ellen G. Miles, Curator and Chair, Department of Painting and Sculpture, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Personal interview, July 15, 2008, Washington, D.C.
not commodities to be bought and sold. Unlike today, when the value of a painting is strongly linked to its creator, the name of the artist did not determine the price in the early years of the southern colonies. Rather, portraits were treasured for providing a visible and lasting means of establishing and maintaining the family’s good name and fortune. By first considering the most objective aspects of the painting, the reader can begin to understand and interpret the more subjective aesthetic and symbolic natures of this portrait.

**Portrait Size**

Canvases were available stretched and primed from America or Britain in standard sizes: whole- or full-length, which varied in size but was generally about 100” by 50”, three-quarter or half-length (50” by 40”), and bust-length (30” by 25”), though artists could build or purchase a frame in a custom size and stretch a canvas to fit. Each size reflected particular expectations about which portions of the body would be included, i.e., a whole-length canvas would include the entire body, head to toe, whereas a bust-length canvas might include the head, shoulders, and possibly one or two hands.2 The portrait of Eleanor is approximately 54 inches x 44 1/2 inches, a non-standard size. Notes from the conservation and cleaning of this portrait show that a strip of canvas may have been added before the painting was executed, suggesting that this was indeed an ambitious portrayal of the sitter, intended to display many aspects of the family’s status and values. The largest canvases (each approximately 54 inches x 44

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of the Kuhn portraits completed circa 1710 were used for the four grandchildren and for Colonel Darnall.

The Frame

According to J. Hall Pleasants, the earliest known Kuhn biographer, the frame surrounding the portrait of Eleanor Darnall is original. The official 1717 inventory of Kuhn’s estate includes a listing for “a parcole of wooden lumber,” making it plausible that Kuhn, like many itinerant artists, was responsible for crafting the frames for his canvases. More accomplished artists, particularly those in larger cities, could specify the type of frame to be used on the portraits they created. A tradesman who specialized in frames would then procure one or create a custom frame to the artist’s specifications.

Portrait Location

At the time the portraits were donated to the Maryland Historical Society in 1912, they hung in the front hall of Poplar Hill, the longtime estate of the Darnall descendents. Records of colonial American homes show that the dining room was a primary location for displaying family portraits. These two principal rooms on the main floor would have been accessible to visitors, but more important, would have been the rooms most frequently used by family members. There, portraits served as reminders of the family’s ancestors as individuals, and when taken together, conveyed the orderly

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3 The portrait of Charles Carroll of Annapolis is 53 ½ inches x 38 ½ inches, and the only one of the four in which the child is not centered on the canvas, leading this writer to speculate that a vertical strip may have been cut from the canvas after the portrait was finished.
succession of the family through generations. No other surviving references in journals or wills allude to this portrait of Eleanor. Since early colonial American portraits were intended for the private use of families, never for the purpose of public exhibition, and since there were no newspapers in Annapolis until after 1725, it is not surprising that the production of these family images went unrecorded.

Cost

Margaretta Lovell compares the investment value of a portrait with that of a tombstone: both were non-exchangeable commodities. Families would no more consider selling an ancestor’s portrait than they would sell that person’s grave. The costs incurred in creating a portrait were expenses, not investments. Generally, English painters of this era charged twice as much for a three-quarter-length as for a bust-length likeness, and four times as much for a full-length portrait.\textsuperscript{4} A slightly later contemporary of Justus Engelhardt Kuhn, Gustavius Hesselius, received five to ten pounds each for portraits he painted in Maryland and Pennsylvania in 1722-1735, roughly the cost of a silver teapot. John Watson was paid four to five pounds each for portraits he painted.\textsuperscript{5} Nehemiah Partridge paid ten pounds and painted four portraits in

\textsuperscript{4} J.D. Stewart, “Records of Payment to Sir Godfrey Kneller and his Contemporaries,” \textit{The Burlington Magazine}, Vol. 113, No. 814, 30.

exchange for a horse from Albany merchant Evert Wendell in 1718.\(^6\) In 1705 in England, Sir Godfrey Kneller, court painter to Queen Anne, charged his private clients forty guineas for a full-length portrait (roughly equal to 21 pounds).\(^7\) Transactions in guineas rather than pounds were considered appropriate among professionals and the gentry. Painters generally charged a portion of their fees up front, with the remainder due on the satisfactory completion of the painting. Children’s full-length portraits generally cost more than those of adults because of the increased difficulty of capturing details of a small (and often moving) body and hands.

Only the wealthiest of the early colonists could afford a portrait. The majority of the early settlers came to America with few resources and spent any earnings they realized on meeting basic needs or paying debts. The vast expanses of the early colonies were sparsely populated, and census records show that the populations of even the biggest colonial American cities were small compared to their European counterparts. The population of Boston in the year 1700 was 6,700, New York had 5,000 inhabitants, and Philadelphia, 4,400. By comparison, the population in London that same year was approximately 600,000, while the population in the entire state of Maryland was approximately 34,000, with Anne Arundel County (where Annapolis is located) accounting for approximately 4,000 inhabitants, including women, children, and


slaves. Only a tiny proportion of this number would have had the means to commission a single portrait, let alone the dozen or more paintings of the Carroll-Digges-Darnall family attributed to Kuhn.

The Portrait Sitting

Records of John Smibert (1688-1751) and John Singleton Copley (1738-1815) show that successful painters could, on average, produce one portrait every two weeks. Margaretta Lovell describes a standard process by which colonial artists could execute a portrait “in three sittings, totaling about ten hours, almost the entirety of which was devoted to the process of painting the face.”

It is likely that the Darnalls received Kuhn at their Woodyard home for the portrait sittings of Eleanor. The inventory of Kuhn’s estate records ten shirts and three neck cloths, indicating an extensive wardrobe that could well have been used by him to travel to the homes of his clients, during which time he also would have made good use of his one old bay horse and mare, a saddle and two bridles, and two canvas bags.

In eighteenth-century Britain the process of painting a subject could become a social gathering for observers. In her book, *Hanging the Head*, Marcia Pointon refers to the habit of sitters bringing friends and relatives to the studio as “more performance art

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than the deeply psychological dialogue that it is often presented as.”

In the case of someone as young as Eleanor, it is likely that at least one other adult would have been in the room where Kuhn was painting the child. If other members of the family knew they were going to be the subject of a portrait, it would not be improbable to believe that they might stop in to watch the artist at work, particularly because the extended family all lived in the same general area. Or perhaps these same family members decided to commission their own portraits after seeing the execution of the likenesses of Eleanor and her brother, Henry.

**Portrait Style**

The tradition of decorative arts is recorded in the British guild, the Worshipful Company of Painter-Stainers, founded in 1283. The work of a painter originally centered on the application of color to solid materials, such as stone, plaster, wood or metal, whereas a stainer applied color to woven materials, including canvas. Over the years, both trades continued to carry out decorative work to buildings, flags, and banners, while expanding to include graining, marbling, gilding, and restoration.11

Each British monarch of this era tapped artists from throughout Europe to serve as court painters, who then ushered in styles that were widely imitated throughout

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England. Among the most prized forms of painting were history and genre paintings, followed by portraiture. Although there was as yet no Academy, painters learned their techniques by apprenticing to members of the painter-stainers guild. Apprentices often specialized in a particular portion of a painting, perhaps excelling at the depiction of drapery or architectural detail. By having a “stable” of trained assistants, the accomplished artist, even the court painter, could avoid the more repetitious aspects of portraiture and instead concentrate on the more difficult work of painting heads and hands.

Few examples of late seventeenth-century New England portraiture survive to offer a comparison with the work that Kuhn produced in colonial Maryland. Louisa Dresser discusses a group of full-length portraits that includes images of Robert, Margaret and Henry Gibbs, painted in Boston in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.\(^\text{12}\) The anonymous artist portrayed each sitter in a nearly full-frontal pose gazing directly at the viewer, with a dark background broken only by a Latin inscription noting the sitter’s age and year of the painting. The emphasis is on line rather than shadow to create a sense of dimension, though the paintings appear quite flat, despite an attempt at perspective with floor tiles that lead back to a drawn curtain. There is only a cursory attempt at showing folds in the fabric, and the anatomy of the sitters is stiff and often disproportionate.

The portrait of two-year-old Alice Mason (formerly thought to be of John Quincy) in 1670 shows a full-length (38 ½ x 24 7/8”) image of a child in period clothes holding an apple, standing on a floor of black and white squares with a dark red-brown background.13 The inscription over the sitter’s left shoulder reads “AE: 2Ao 1670.” The two-dimensionality of the painting is reinforced by the very flat images pressed against the foreground of the canvas, with only cursory attempts at perspective in the floor tiles. There is no middle- or background, no landscape or window, no attributes other than the apple in the child’s hand. The colors are somber and dark, the figures are stiff and painted without connection to their surroundings. The artist is unknown, though similarities in canvas size, pose, brush stroke and composition point to possible authorship of the three Gibbs children’s portraits, each of which is identified by the inclusion of the traditional Latin abbreviation AE to indicate age, followed by the year: Robert Gibbs, age 4 ½, 1670 (40 x 33”); Margaret Gibbs, age 7, 1670 (40 ½ x 33”); Henry Gibbs, age 1 ½, 1670 (40 ½ x 33”). Scholars have made comparisons among the portraits of the Gibbs children, Alice Mason, and that of Mrs. John Freake and Baby Mary (42 ½ x 36 8/10”)14, a well-known oil on canvas painted c. 1671/74. All are similarly concentrated on revealing details of the clothing rather than the character of the sitter to convey information about the social and economic status of the families.


They typify the portraiture tradition of the late seventeenth century in colonial America and can be contrasted with Kuhn’s portraits of the four grandchildren by the omission of iconography, vibrant color, and individuality.

The style of painting used in the portrait of Eleanor Darnall suggests that Kuhn may have been trained as a decorative painter, since his images all have a two-dimensional, linear quality that focuses on details of fabric and architecture rather than modeling and shadow. Such skills would have been typical of a decorative painter, one who specialized in exterior house painting, signs, coats of arms, or interior faux painting, as well as specialty work in the studio of another artist. Listings in the inventory of Kuhn’s estate are evidence that he did such work: “14 pictures and Land Skips, Mr. Doynes Coat of Arms unfinished, 3 pictures unfinished.”

The Baroque manner that was prevalent in Kuhn’s formative years typically portrayed power and wealth through opulent dress and settings which reflected or heightened the status and character ascribed to the sitter. Baroque painters often showcased the grandeur of nature and the power of the Creator, particularly in landscape and still-life paintings that incorporate images of plants and insects in various stages of growth and decline to indicate mortality. Kuhn’s painting of Eleanor included many of those Baroque elements.

In contrast to the Baroque style, New England portraits often present their subjects pressed close to the picture plane, devoid of any background. Kuhn, however, chose to create a detailed landscape, revealed in layers of perspective that draw the eye
across and back into the canvas. In most previous discussions of Eleanor’s portrait, the background has received little attention. Pleasants describes rather than interprets the backgrounds in the four large paintings of children, saying little more about them beyond calling them typical formal gardens.\textsuperscript{15} Others attribute Kuhn’s inspiration for the background details to landscape engravings or mezzotints.\textsuperscript{16} Some writers suggest that the landscape and architectural details allude to the aristocratic status which the extended Darnall family sought in Maryland.\textsuperscript{17} Perhaps the detailed setting could be interpreted as a reflection of an educated and well-traveled artist who had seen firsthand such elaborate grounds, architectural detail, and fabrics; a man who appreciated culture enough to own 39 books and a flute, and a man whose social standing justified owning 21 pewter plates, 9 pewter dishes, 5 cane chairs and 6 old rush chairs, and ten pounds of sugar (a rare and valuable commodity), as listed in the inventory of his estate.

Early painters, even those who had received formal training abroad, would certainly have had to do supplemental work to make a living. Louisa Dresser suggests that in making the change from decorative painter to portraitist, it is not unlikely that an immigrant artist in early colonial America would have painted in the Baroque manner

\textsuperscript{15} Pleasants, Justus Engelhardt Kuhn, \textit{An Early Eighteenth Century Maryland Portrait Painter} (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society), 1937, 19, 26, 29, 30.

\textsuperscript{16} Ann Van Devanter, interview on September 4, 2008, Washington, D.C.

he remembered from several years or even decades earlier.\textsuperscript{18} By comparing Kuhn’s work with that of roughly contemporary New England artists, we see sharp differences that indicate Kuhn was drawing on a very different tradition and training than the naïve style used in the northern colonies. It should be noted here that some early New England painters may have had access to prints by Van Dyck and his contemporaries, though that influence did not appear in their portraits until after Kuhn’s time.

**Iconography**

Kuhn may have been influenced by the perceived hierarchy of genres, in which history paintings were considered the pinnacle of painting, whereas portraits were relegated to a lower position, surpassing only landscapes and still-lifes. By adding content that suggested an intellectual or moral message, a painter could elevate the level of discourse contained in his painting. Children often were painted surrounded by images that conveyed a message that reflected the values of society, while simultaneously recording the image of the child for posterity. Painters frequently relied on emblem books to provide guidance in selecting recognizable and appropriate images.

In Roland Fleischer’s informative article, “Emblems and Colonial American Painting,”\textsuperscript{19} the author offers secular interpretations for much of the symbolism in the painting of Eleanor. For example, he interprets the rose as a symbol of Venus, the vine


as an emblem of love, and the dog as depicting friendship. These interpretations are derived from Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia*,\(^{20}\) which was used for centuries as a source of symbolism in art. Although Fleischer’s interpretations correctly explain the iconography in traditional artistic terms, it is difficult to believe that a portrait of a member of the leading Catholic family in Maryland, one meant to be seen only by family members and close friends, would not reflect the deeply held religious beliefs of the family. Even if Kuhn were not familiar with Catholic iconography, he may have had access to one of the many Jesuit-produced emblem books of the era. The Jesuit priest, Henry Hawkins, wrote *Partheneia Sacra: The Mysterious and Delicious Garden of the Sacred Parthenes* in 1633, a few months after the founding of Maryland. This book has been referred to as the most important Catholic emblem book in English literature.\(^{21}\) For example, Hawkins described Jesus as “the precious pearl” in the womb of Mary. In this portrait, Eleanor’s single strand of pearls can be seen in a secular sense as a sign of her wealth and good breeding, in a traditional artistic sense as a sign of purity; but viewed through the eyes of Catholic tradition, those same pearls could be interpreted as a sign of salvation (Mt 13:45). These three layers of meaning add context to the portrait that may not have been obvious to anyone outside the immediate circle of family and friends.


Eleanor’s pink dress is topped with a cape of dark blue, the color associated with
the Madonna, and another layer of blue is visible at the sleeves. The lace on Eleanor’s
dress is painted in exquisite detail, reflecting both the skill of the painter and the Darnall
family’s ability to afford such costly and probably imported trimmings. An unseen light
source appears to reflect off the lace on the apron, which is accentuated on the skirt
portion by an intricate pattern of elongated rectangles topped by arches resembling
stained-glass windows and accentuated by a pattern of rounded crosses. This equal-
sized, four-sided Consecration cross shape traditionally suggests the role of Christians
as disciples, rather than the more common Crucifixion cross, which emphasizes Christ’s
suffering and death. Such an interpretation would have been meaningful for Catholics,
who faced fluctuating tolerance for their religion throughout most of the seventeenth
and eighteenth centuries and saw themselves as missionaries.

The practice of using a curtain and column in portraits may have originated in
paintings of the Virgin and Child seated under an awning or draped throne. In
Renaissance altarpieces of the Virgin and Child, especially those of the Low Countries,
the draped awning often had a liturgical association, as it could represent the altar cloth
or canopy, and, by extension, the Eucharist. 22 In this portrait the curtain is held in
place by ivy that encircles a stone column, calling to mind both the classical virtues of
antiquity and the unsupported vine that Fleisher interprets as symbolic of an unmarried
woman. From a religious perspective, that same vine could represent the Church (Jn

15:1-5). The three rows of blue and white tiles on the floor echo the coat of arms of the Stuarts, which consists of a simple yellow shield with three horizontal rows of blue and white squares. Eleanor stands firmly centered on two of those tiles, suggesting allegiance to the royal family who had (until the 1688-89 Revolution) allowed Catholics some leniency in practicing their faith.

The urn of flowers can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The flowers could indicate the fragility of life, as in a Vanitas painting. The roses are traditional symbols of the Virgin Mother, the lilies symbolize the resurrection, daisies are a sign of innocence, narcissus shows the triumph of divine love and sacrifice over earthly life, and the cut roses showing many petals in full bloom atop the balustrade bring to mind the rosary, whose Latin name, *rosarium*, also means rose garden. Directly above the single light pink rose, and only discernable when viewing the portrait in person or in close-up photos taken during conservation, is a statue of a soldier in Renaissance British armor holding a spear, in the image of the patron saint of Britain. St. George was persecuted for his Christian beliefs under the fourth century Roman Emperor Diocletian. The soldier stands guard over the rose, protecting the faith. A comparable figure is included in the background of Sir Godfrey Kneller’s 1694 portrait of Queen Anne.

The stone balustrade separates the interior room from the formal garden outside. It is reminiscent of the communion rail or rood screen that is still used in many churches today to separate the lay congregation from the anointed priest and sacred
objects. The poplar trees in the background could easily be a reference to Poplar Hill, one of the Darnall estates. Joanna Woodall notes that “both pastoral and van Dyckian portraiture, which frequently used exterior settings, alluded to the land, to which the hereditary nobility undeniably had a superior claim.”

By depicting a vast expanse of land in the background of Eleanor’s portrait, Kuhn may have indicated the status of the Darnall family as rightful landowners with vast holdings.

The nearby garden is a sign of tranquility in art. It can have a sacred meaning when it is enclosed as in this painting, signifying its use as an orderly place for meditation or separation from the untamed world of nature. In the Song of Songs 12:4, the enclosed garden is symbolic of Mary’s virginity: “You are an enclosed garden… a fountain sealed.” Botticelli’s 1489 Annunciation, now in the collection of the Uffizi, is just one example of such iconography. The fountain could be interpreted as a fountain of youth, a symbol of the sitter’s six years of age, or perhaps as a sign of baptism, the first sacramental encounter between a child and God.

The dog forms one-third of the triangular center of the portrait, neatly allowing the eye to follow the line down from Eleanor’s face and across her formal clothes to then consider the other objects in the foreground. The choice of a Cavalier King Charles spaniel for the dog was surely no coincidence; Cavalier refers to those who were loyal to the Royalists in the civil wars in seventeenth-century Britain. King

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Charles and his successors through James II were mostly tolerant and often overtly supportive of the Catholic Calverts’ efforts to support the practice of their faith in Maryland. Dogs are often included in art to symbolize fidelity, though Elisabeth Roark notes that the Latin root of fidelity, fides, also the same word for faith, is the basis for the popular dog name, Fido. In this interpretation, the dog could stand for someone grounded in her belief in God, further accentuated by the triangular (Trinity) formation of the only two living creatures pictured. Roark offers the intriguing comparison of a dog guarding a herd of sheep with the priest who protects and guides his human flock.

Roark continues the line of thinking by reminding the reader of the role women played in the survival of Catholicism by ensuring their children were raised in the faith regardless of the father’s practices. Eleanor is portrayed as the future caretaker of the faith. Rather than looking up at its owner, the dog looks across Eleanor’s skirt toward the large head on the balustrade.

Certainly the most intriguing and mysterious accessories in the portrait are the overly large head, or grotesque, on the balustrade at the lower right, and the head on the large urn of flowers placed directly above. The grotesque in art has been used since ancient times, in the wall paintings of Pompeii, as Greek theater masks, and on French cathedral gargoyles, as well as in the paintings of well-known Western artists, including Hieronymous Bosch, Caravaggio, Rubens, and Van Dyck. Each artist incorporated symbolic, haunting images meant to invoke a complex variety of dramatic responses in

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the viewer. In the iconography of painting, portraiture is frequently represented by the inclusion of a mask. 26 These two heads could be simply Baroque grotesques. It is unlikely that they depict the two lions of the Calvert coat of arms, as posited by Roland Fleischer, since they appear to be clearly human, not animal, heads.

Another interpretation exists that has not been previously explored in academic articles about this painting, however. The head painted to appear as a relief on the stone pillar could be read as a herm, a square stone pillar surmounted by a bust or head to serve religious and/or decorative functions. 27 Derived from Hermes, the messenger of the Greek gods and the protector of travelers, herms were posts set up to mark transitions or boundaries in ancient Greece and Rome. Such an interpretation would be perfectly in keeping with the idea that Eleanor was about to embark on a journey for her education but also for her faith. Equally intriguing is the 2,000-year-old concept of hermeneutics (also derived from Hermes), a philosophy which invites the viewer or reader to interpret hidden meanings, often related to the bible. Hermes himself is often depicted with short, curly hair, increasing the possibility that Kuhn could have used the image to invite the viewer to look beyond the literal meaning of the items in the painting for their symbolism. It is known that Italian painters were called to the British court in the seventeenth century, and that they would have brought their classical

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training to the decorative painting and portraiture created at the request of King Charles and his family. Italian artists brought to England during that period included Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi, who had lived and painted from Naples to Venice, where they would have been intimately familiar with the classical arts.

Two similar urns decorated with grotesques and holding large bouquets of flowers are included on the title page of the 1633 edition of John Gerard’s *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes... Enlarged and Amended by Thomas Johnson*. The book, considered the most famous of the Elizabethan herbals, was printed in at least two separate editions, indicating a large circulation. Considering its distribution and reputation as a “sophisticated and comprehensive work,” it is plausible that the book may have been available to Kuhn either in Europe or through a bookseller in colonial Maryland. Antony Griffiths writes that the two vases of flowers on *The Herball*’s frontispiece appear to be copied from a Dutch original.28 Roland Fleischer identified similar elements of a dog, head on a vase and roses in Van Dyck’s portrait of Isabella, Lady de la Warr, noting particularly that these were symbols used by the painter rather than the personal property of the sitter.29


Artistic Traditions and Inspirations

Scholars have suggested that Kuhn was influenced by the work of Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641), who became the most sought-after and fashionable artist during the Stuart reign. Van Dyck’s use of classical columns, swept-back curtains, and elaborate details in the fabrics and backgrounds, combined with his Titianesque approach to color and surfaces, became the height of fashion in the first half of the seventeenth century. Van Dyck’s 1635 portrait of The Three Eldest Children of Charles I [see Image Two] was an iconic image of that time, especially among Royalist supporters. Numerous copies and prints are noted in the catalogue raisonné of Van Dyck. Possessing a reproduction of such royal portraits before and after the Restoration was a way for a citizen to state his loyalty. The original painting hung at Somerset House, the royal residence of the queens of James I, Charles I, and Charles II, and now is in the collection of Windsor Castle. A comparison of the upper torso of Princess Mary in this painting with that of Eleanor Darnall in Kuhn’s painting shows several remarkable similarities. Both girls are approximately the same age, dressed in the finery of the day, with their bodies turned slightly to their right and their faces looking directly at the viewer. Each sitter is painted with a flattened right cheek and square jaw, prominent red lips, a string of pearls, and upper arms that begin to reach out. At the side of each girl is a Blenheim-type spaniel, whose back extends the line from the girl’s head to the floor. The point at which Kuhn’s painting of Eleanor

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significantly weakens in comparison to Van Dyck’s Princess Mary is in the depiction of the arms. Mary’s clasped hands are proportional and realistic, whereas Eleanor’s forearms and hands are awkwardly drawn and too small for her body. If indeed Kuhn apprenticed in London, he may well have seen copies of this painting and used it as a source for Eleanor’s likeness.

Joanna Woodall addresses the multiple layers of meaning inherent in portraiture, and suggests that a portrait’s “similarity to royal and courtly exemplars forms the basis of the characterization. Identity is produced primarily through resemblance to one’s pictorial ‘ancestors’ – in role, if not in blood.”31 Eleanor was most likely named after her paternal grandmother, Eleanor Hatton Brookes, the second wife of Colonel Darnall. As the first granddaughter of the most powerful Catholic in America, it would not be implausible to view Eleanor in the role of a princess, worthy of admiration and praise now and expected to fulfill a greater role in the future. By copying a well-known image of Princess Mary for Eleanor’s likeness, Kuhn may have intended to flatter the Darnalls by drawing a comparison between the two young girls and, by extension, between the Darnalls and the British royal family. Colonel Darnall may well have asked Kuhn to reinforce this political affiliation in a manner that could be read by Royalists though remain unseen by the Protestant leaders enforcing the oppressive British laws.

Another possible source of inspiration and/or instruction is Franz Cleyn [Francis Clein] (1582-1658). “Cleyn, the inimitable designer of grotesques,” was an immigrant from the Baltic port of Rostock, Germany. He was recognized early for his talents, and was sent to Venice and Rome, after which he went to Copenhagen to work as a decorative painter at Rosenborg Castle, where he specialized in ornamental devices (grotesques and architectural borders) as well as portraits. He moved to London, where he was appointed by James I as the first artistic director and designer at Mortlake Tapestry Works. Cleyn established a painting workshop in London, where apprentices included his three children and the English portraitist, William Dobson (1610-1646). Tapestry designers relied heavily on cartoons from classical frescoes and paintings for the ornate patterns at the center of their work, adding intricate borders that drew on symbolism and allegory in art. The catalogue raisonné of Van Dyck’s works notes that copies of the heads of the boys from the portrait of The Three Eldest Children of Charles I are incorporated in Mortlake tapestry of 1672.

Spurred on by the Renaissance interest in the classics, many artists incorporated the use of grotesques in their work. Though Kuhn’s work is in the manner of Van Dyck, his use of grotesques, architecture, and drapery are similar to Cleyn's and unique in colonial American portraiture of that period. Although we have no clue to Kuhn’s

32 Ellen Creathorne Clayton, English Female Artists, (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1876), 30.
34 Barnes et al, Van Dyck: A Complete Catalogue of the Paintings, 478.
birth date, the fact that he fathered a child in 1713 makes it unlikely that he would have
known Cleyn before the artist’s death in 1658. It may be possible, however, that Kuhn
apprenticed in his workshop, which continued after Cleyn’s death.

Kuhn’s artistic skills and English language abilities were well enough developed
that he became the sole portraitist of the Catholic gentry in colonial Maryland only two
years after becoming a naturalized citizen, indicating that he must have been exposed to
the English language prior to his arrival in Maryland. We know that the German
immigrant population in London was significant: “The end of 1669 practically saw the
completion of the work [of rebuilding the original Painter-Stainers Hall burned in the
1666 Great Fire of London] since at that date it was resolved by the Court to let the
German Protestants have the use of the Hall twice every Lord’s day and on every
holiday, at a rental of 24 pounds per annum.”

A third possible source of training for Kuhn in a London workshop at the turn of
the eighteenth century was with the court painter, Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723).
Kneller was another German-born painter (Gottfried Kniller) who came to England in
the mid-1670’s. After a very successful reception in London, and on the death of Lely,
he assumed the role of leading painter under James II, and was eventually appointed as
court painter to William III and Mary II in 1689. Court painters were responsible for
much more than portraits of the royal family; banners for court functions, elaborately
decorated table items for state occasions, ornate, painted statuary for gardens, even

35 W. Hayward Pittman, The Worshipful Company of Painters, Otherwise Painter-Stainers: Its
oversight of parades and processions, all fell within the realm of their responsibilities.\textsuperscript{36}

Kneller is well known for mass-producing portraits with the assistance of a large group of specialist painters from his workshop. In Kneller’s portrait of the Harvey Family from 1721, he uses similar elements of an urn, column, dress, dog, and pastel colors for females, all against a decorative background.

Socially, Kneller was a member of the Honourable Order of Little Bedlam, founded by John Cecil, Fifth Earl of Exeter (1648-1700). Interestingly, each member of the Order had his portrait painted with an animal from which he received a nickname.\textsuperscript{37}

Each of Kuhn’s four large portraits of children includes an animal (deer, parrot, pheasant, dog). Scholars of colonial art may want to consider whether Kuhn “quoted” Kneller (the unicorn) by including an animal that could somehow be linked to a (now lost) nickname or characteristic of each child. The Order had its meetings at Burghley, where Mortlake tapestries still hang.

Another member of the Order, Antonio Verrio (the porcupine), was the principal decorative painter of his time. A Roman Catholic, Verrio’s finest surviving work is at Burghley, where the color scheme of his work is described as “light and gay and the decorative elements thoroughly well handled, but his figures are almost invariably feebly drawn,”\textsuperscript{38} a description that may aptly be applied to Kuhn’s paintings. It is


\textsuperscript{37}Gervase Jackson-Stops, \textit{The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting}, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 160-161.
possible that Kuhn worked for Verrio and met Kneller, who made an introduction to the
Darnalls via Charles Calvert. Verrio’s first clients were the Jesuits, who also may have
provided the link with the Maryland families.

A further potential link between Kneller and Kuhn is the fact that Kneller was
the portraitist for the third Lord Baltimore, Charles Calvert (1637-1715), who came to
Maryland in 1661 with his bride, Mary Darnall of Hertfordshire, England, a relative of
the Maryland Darnalls. It is plausible that the Digges-Darnall-Carroll families asked
their neighbor, Lord Baltimore, to recommend a portraitist who could be sent over from
England, and that Calvert sought advice from Kneller. A letter of introduction from
Kneller on behalf of an apprentice in his workshop would have provided Kuhn the
necessary entrée to this wealthy extended family.

The likeness of the third Lord Baltimore39 by Sir Godfrey Kneller demonstrates
what was then considered among the most prestigious of European portraiture.
Although undated, it is possible to determine a range of dates during which the portrait
was likely produced by considering Calvert’s travels and fluctuating fortunes. Charles
Calvert arrived in Maryland in 1661 when he was named colonial governor of
Maryland. In 1660 Charles Calvert built Mt. Airy, a hunting lodge adjacent to the
Carroll-Digges-Darnall estates. Upon the death of his father, Cecil Calvert (1606-
1675), Charles inherited his land, title and responsibilities as the third Lord Baltimore.

38 Ibid., 162.

39 Portrait of the third Lord Baltimore is available at:
After 24 years as a neighbor and friend to these Catholic families, Calvert returned to England over a land dispute with William Penn. Calvert never again set foot on Maryland soil, due to the Protestant Revolution in 1688-89 that wrested control of Maryland from his family. The portrait was certainly painted between Calvert’s return to England in 1684 and his death in 1715. In the painting he appears to be approximately 60 years old, roughly dating the portrait to 1697. This was likely the same period that Kuhn could have been working in London, where he may have even witnessed the work in progress while in the employ of Kneller.

Kneller is associated with more than 1,200 portraits in the catalogue of the National Portrait Gallery in London. A small (14 ¾ in. x 9 ¾ in.) oil on panel portrait of Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington and 4th Earl of Cork; Lady Jane Boyle\(^{40}\) is attributed to Kneller circa 1700. This portrait shows a boy of about ten years with a dog and a younger girl holding a basket of flowers. The boy, girl and dog form a strong triangle, balanced by a column with a curtain swag pulled back on the right and a grotesque and fountain on the left. Similar elements form the basis of each of the four children’s portraits created by Kuhn, providing further evidence that Kuhn may have learned some of his skills in Kneller’s immense studio.

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Commission

There are no financial transaction records documenting who commissioned the portrait of Eleanor, but by considering the body of work Kuhn completed circa 1710, a likely source emerges. The ten extant portraits from that year are of members of the immediate family of Colonel Henry Darnall. Images include Colonel Darnall and his second wife, two of his children, their spouses, and four grandchildren. The eldest and wealthiest family member was Colonel Darnall, who has been called the most powerful Catholic in colonial America. The extent to which Darnall was likely involved is evidenced by the knowledge that

[c]hildren do not commission portraits, and their presence in them is the result of negotiated relationships in the adult world designed, consciously and unconsciously, to produce a set of explicit and implicit meanings…. On account of the centrality of the child to traditions of moral narrative, it was extremely easy for portraits of children to become bearers of the values society held most dear while still denoting the particular offspring of particular parents.41

Why was this portrait of Eleanor Darnall painted? According to Margaretta Lovell, portraits were painted “at the time of an individual’s achievement of majority, inheritance, marriage, or first issue – moments that mark the movement of family substance in an orderly, prescribed manner.”42 As discussed at length in the previous chapter, it is plausible that the painting was commissioned at the time of Eleanor’s

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42 Lovell, Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America, 10.
departure for her schooling in Liège. The symbolism in the painting refers as much to Eleanor’s future as to her family’s past.

We know that art is not a depiction of reality but rather an interpretation by the artist and sometimes by those who commissioned the work. Titian’s (1488-1576) portrait of Clarissa Strozzi in 1542\(^43\) is an aesthetic representation of what the artist and the family wanted to memorialize about this two-year-old child. The portrait shows Clarissa with a dog near a sculpted stone balustrade. Laurel Reed reminds us that such a large-scale portrait was generally reserved for images of kings and nobility.\(^44\) It is interesting to note that Van Dyck purportedly saw this painting. Portraits of children, rare as they were in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were generally commissioned to depict them in their future roles or to document the continuity of the family line. Reed argues convincingly that Clarissa is portrayed in the process of becoming an adult, acquiring the grace and charm expected of patrician women. Titian reveals information about the character of the sitter through the objects and landscapes included, in much the same way attributes in sculpture reveal the identity of the subject to tell a story. The background hints at what Clarissa will become. To apply this formula to Eleanor’s portrait, it is not her position in society that is pondered as much as her importance in passing along the faith and values of her family as a future mother.

\(^43\) [Link to the image](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Tizian_-_Clarissa_Strozzi.jpg) (roughly 45 x 39” oil on canvas)

Other portraits that provide illuminating comparisons by showing similar iconography include Caesar van Everdingen’s (Dutch) 1664 Portrait of a Two-Year-Old Boy, Jacob Jordaens’ (Flemish) 1635 Portrait of the Painter’s Daughter Anna Catharina, Cornelis Vos’ (Flemish) undated Portrait of a Girl at the Age of 10, and Diego Velazquez’ (Spanish) Infante Felipe Prospero, circa 1660. These additional paintings provide evidence that the tradition of portraying a single child in a setting charged with meaning reached far across Europe. Kuhn’s paintings were the first to bring this style to colonial America.

What could Kuhn have hoped to achieve by painting so many portraits of the extended Carroll-Darnall-Digges family? Most certainly he could have elevated the perception of his abilities (and perhaps the price he could charge) by associating himself with such a prominent and wealthy family. The status of his clients was at least as important as the quality of the portraits in obtaining future commissions. The recommendation of someone as powerful as Colonel Henry Darnall would have carried great weight among Marylanders, especially as the community in and around Annapolis grew rapidly in the early eighteenth century.

**Conclusion**

Did the portrait succeed in delivering what Kuhn and the Darnall family expected? I believe Kuhn created an image of Eleanor and her family’s values that was understood during her lifetime and that can still be read today, particularly by those who
care to see deeper, shared meaning in the portrait. As for Kuhn’s expectations, his extant body of work and the scarce records remaining today leave us without an answer, for now. He was given access to one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Maryland, and perhaps in all of colonial America. The tantalizing question of how he learned his skill and then gained entrée to this close-knit family has yet to be definitively answered. It is equally intriguing that there is no evidence that his relationship with this family resulted in commissions from other families or dignitaries, which would have been a primary motive for any artist establishing himself in the early days of colonial America.

What we can say with certainty is that Kuhn created these portraits in a very few years at the request of the rich and powerful families of early Maryland. This is significant because he now holds a place in history as the first known portraitist in the southern colonies. What is open to speculation is that which the painter and the family intended to hide from nearly all viewers: the potentially symbolic nature of everything that surrounds Eleanor in this work of art. By examining the cultural context in which this painting was executed, we can begin to answer some of the many questions posed by this portrait.
Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641)

*The Three Eldest Children of Charles I*, 1635

Oil on canvas. 133.4 x 151.8 cm (approx. 53 x 60”)

Windsor Castle, Royal Collection, UK

Inscribed: REGIS MAGNAE BRITANIAE / PROLES / PRINCEPS CAROLVS NATVS 29 MAY 1630./ IACOBOVS DVXEBORACENCIS NATVS 14 OCT:1633 / ET FILIA PRINCEPS MARIA NATA 4 NO: 1631 and signed and dated...,PER AN VAN DYCK EQ. / ANNO 1635

The Royal Collection © 2008, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
CHAPTER THREE
THE PORTRAIT IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT

What needs might this ambitious portrait have met? Early eighteenth century Marylanders witnessed historically significant shifts in the governance of their province and, in particular, in the practice of their Catholic faith. By considering the status and values of the extended Carroll-Darnall-Digges family, an illuminating view emerges of the fluctuating tolerance for Catholics in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British colonial and Maryland provincial law. These changes could well have been a secondary, but motivating, factor for commissioning the portrait of six-year-old Eleanor in 1710.

Maryland History

The 1632 Charter of Maryland granted Cecil Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, ownership of all the land within the boundaries of the colony, though it held little value without someone to live on and work the land. To induce settlers to come from England, Calvert offered favorable terms to those willing to make the journey across the Atlantic, particularly to those who brought laborers with them at their own cost. Two thousand acres were granted to each man for every five laborers he brought over in 1633, one thousand acres were given for every five laborers brought over after 1634, and those who came without a group of laborers received one hundred acres for each
man or woman and fifty acres for each child. Charles, the third Lord Baltimore, established a separate Land Office in 1680 with two distinct locations, one in Annapolis and one on the Eastern Shore. After arriving in Maryland and entering their names in the appropriate record, settlers sought a warrant of survey, followed by a formal warrant from the Governor or his representative to the surveyor, who then executed the survey and recorded it in a certificate of survey. Once those steps were completed, a land patent was issued under the signature of the Governor. This process could take several years and was often hindered by distance, lack of funds, or just as often, unfamiliarity with the persons in authority. In contrast, those who had the means to travel to the seats of government and had access to the civic leaders were in a better position to take formal possession of their promised land.

From the first days of settlement the cultivation of tobacco dominated all aspects of Maryland life, and subsequently the colonists placed a premium on owning farms that could produce this crop for consumption and currency. Huge tracts of land were required to grow tobacco, which was used as the major means of trade. In 1695, tobacco was worth approximately a penny per pound, roughly equating to a valuation of 100 pounds sterling for 24,000 pounds of tobacco. In an address of the Assembly to

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the Governor in 1702, it was stated that the average annual wage of a laboring man in the Province of Maryland was 2,000 pounds of tobacco.\(^3\)

Colonel Henry Darnall was one of the earliest British subjects to take advantage of this offer to gain a foothold in the New World as a tobacco farmer. He arrived in Maryland in 1672 and parlayed his connections with Lord Baltimore into positions of power in the new colony while continuing to buy up or receive as outright gifts from the Calverts vast tracts of land. As noted, he owned nearly 30,000 acres of land at his death. The scale of his wealth can be considered by comparing Darnall’s landholdings with the 8,000 acres George Washington owned at Mount Vernon, or the 5,000 acres held by Thomas Jefferson. Although from the different ends of the same century, these men held enormous power, at least in part, because of their status as the owners of vast estates.

**The Cost of Being Catholic**

To better understand the society in which the Darnalls lived and in which the portrait of Eleanor was commissioned, it is instructive to consider the harsh legal environment that prohibited the extended family from fully participating in the religious, social and political life of Maryland. Maryland Catholics embraced a faith that had developed, in part, as a result of British persecution. In his exhaustive review of early colonial American laws pertaining to the suppression of Catholicism, Francis

\(^3\) Ibid., 26.
X. Curran, S.J., declared that one certain way of establishing the authority of the Crown in all matters of faith was to paint Catholics and their Pope as enemies of the State. To summarize Curran’s 200+ year legal chronology, starting in 1559 under the reign of Elizabeth I, at least 25 different laws designed to suppress the practice of Catholicism throughout the kingdom or to limit the rights of Catholics in the Maryland colony were enacted, retracted and revised. Back in London, the involvement of Guy Fawkes in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 fueled the image of Catholics plotting against the King. A series of laws was enacted in Britain to “discover and repress Popish recusants” unwilling to take the oath of allegiance or participate in Church of England services. Potential penalties ranged from monetary fines to banishment from England to execution.

The first act was known as the Oath of Supremacy, which required all British citizens to testify that the queen was the supreme governor of the realm, including in all spiritual or ecclesiastical matters. British subjects also had to renounce all foreign jurisdictions, powers, superiorities and authorities. Those who refused to take the oath were known as recusants and were penalized accordingly. A 1606 law required Catholics to take an oath to King James I and receive communion in an Anglican church annually; those who refused to comply were charged with an increasing fine for each year of nonconformity or, at the King’s option, had land taken from them or were subject to charges of high treason. Later that same year it became illegal for priests to

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celebrate and Catholics to attend Mass. Catholics subsequently were prevented from practicing law or medicine or serving as officers or soldiers, as well as importing, printing, selling, buying or owning any Catholic item (rosary, missal, book of saints, etc.). The law allowed the authorities to search the house of recusants for such materials, confiscate the evidence and imprison the offenders.

Those laws remained in place until 1649, when the second Lord Baltimore authored one of the most famous laws concerning Catholicism, Maryland’s Act of Toleration. In part, it states that “no person… professing to believe in Jesus Christ shall from henceforth be anyways troubled, molested or discountenanced, for or in respect of his or her religion, nor in the free exercise thereof… in which protection is provided to Christians, believers in the Blessed Virgin Mary, and observers of the Lord’s Day.”  

Parliament viewed this act as outrageous, and used it as fodder in the ensuing civil war in England that ended with the execution of King Charles I. Catholics were disenfranchised in 1654 and the Act of Toleration was repealed. Religious liberty in Maryland was partially restored in 1658 after prolonged negotiations by Lord Baltimore. These laws affected thousands of people; in 1669, approximately one in ten Marylanders (out of a population of more than 34,000) was Catholic. Charles II suspended the penal laws in 1672, but Parliament responded by announcing that laws could only be suspended by an act of Parliament. Additionally, Parliament added the

5 Ibid., 25.

Test Act of 1673, which required anyone holding a civil or military office to deny a belief in transubstantiation. Unfounded threats in 1678 led to an additional Test Act outlawing the invocation of the Virgin Mary or any other saint, calling the Sacrifice of the Mass superstitious and idolatrous. James II attempted to resolve the religious conflict in 1687 with the Declaration of Indulgence, which would have ended persecution of Catholics; instead it became a major cause of the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688-89 that forced the last Catholic king from the throne of England. The 1689 Act for the Abrogating of the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance and Appointing Other Oaths required an oath of allegiance to William and Mary and against the pope. Also in 1689, the Toleration Act of William and Mary was extended to Protestants, who differed with the Church of England, but specifically excluded Roman Catholics, Jews and atheists.

In 1688, upon sailing from England to Maryland, the Carroll family changed their motto from “Strong in Faith and War” to “Anywhere so Long as there be Freedom.” What better indication could there be of the extended family’s fierce desire to worship freely? In 1689, the religious persecution had reached across the Atlantic to Maryland where Catholics were excluded from holding office, the Catholic Baltimore family lost its proprietorship of Maryland, and royal governors were installed with specific instructions to tolerate any and all religions except Catholicism. Catholic lawyers in Maryland were disbarred in 1692, just prior to the removal of the provincial capital from St. Mary’s City to Annapolis. Irish Papist servants were subject to a
special tax starting in 1699, and bounties were established in 1700 with An Act for the Further Preventing the Growth of Popery, aimed at identifying and capturing priests who celebrated Mass, with convictions resulting in imprisonment.

Two separate acts in 1704 closed the Catholic church in St. Mary’s City and fined and imprisoned abroad those priests who baptized children or celebrated Mass, though some relief was provided in an act later that year that allowed Mass to be said in private homes. Subsequent laws limited recusants’ rights to vote, own land, hold office, or practice their faith. Full civil and religious freedoms were not extended to Catholics until 1776, when federal and state laws were amended to recognize that “it is the duty of every man to worship God in such manner as he thinks most acceptable to him…[and] all persons… are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty…”

This dizzying array of rules and punishments must have kept the authorities in a constant state of flux, with a delay of news from England that could extend from a few months to more than a year. Enforcement of the laws was certainly dependent on the individual in charge at any particular moment, which must have been frustrating for the Catholic population, who never knew how secretive they had to be about their faith. Because they had been cut off from Rome for many years in England, Catholics in British colonies perhaps were more independent in their religion and less public in its display than their Continental ancestors, walking a fine line initially between loyalty to the Crown and faithfulness to the Pope.

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Clandestine practices were necessary for recusant Catholics to celebrate Mass and receive the sacraments. Religious objects such as the saddle chalice, which could be unscrewed and reassembled to look like a merchant’s bell, attest to the determination of the faithful.\textsuperscript{8} Jesuit priests traveled in disguise as merchants to preach and teach throughout southern and eastern Maryland, sometimes journeying 300 miles on horseback in a week.\textsuperscript{9} Other items that stand as evidence of the hardiness of Catholics in the face of oppression include false-bottom chests used to hide vestments for priests to wear at Mass, rosary beads disguised as jewelry, and portable altar stones holding relics of saints, which were considered a vital part of what constituted a legitimate Mass by honoring the long line of holy people who had devoted their lives to the practice of their faith. According to Dr. Chester Gillis, local Protestant officials often tolerated the Catholics’ desire to celebrate Mass as long as it was kept “below the radar.” The availability of these community Masses was spread by word of mouth, not by the posting of signs or ads in a newspaper, due to a mostly illiterate population. Maryland colonists would have depended on the wealthy landowners to provide the space necessary for sacramental purposes of baptizing infants, marrying and burying family members, as well as celebrating of Mass.\textsuperscript{10} The Catholic gentry also provided the link


\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 174.
with the Jesuit community by offering a safe and sometimes secretive haven for these itinerant priests. It was considered a great act of piety to commission recusant chalices and patens, most of which carried no maker’s mark to preserve the silversmith’s identity.11 Throughout most of the eighteenth century, Catholic priests carried well-worn bibles and prayer books printed in England before the Glorious Revolution and smuggled in by travelers to the colonies. Interestingly, no English-language Bible was published in North America until one was requested by Congress in 1780, and subsequently published in 1782 by Robert Aitken in Philadelphia.

**The Role of the Jesuits**

When *The Ark and The Dove*, the first two Calvert-sponsored ships to bring British citizens to Maryland, docked at St. Mary’s City, Father Andrew White came ashore and offered Mass in thanksgiving for a safe arrival. Maryland marks its beginning from that day, March 25, 1632, the Feast of the Annunciation and the first day of the year prior to the Julian calendar’s introduction. There has long been a strong connection between the history of the Jesuit missionary priests aboard those vessels and the Catholics of Maryland.

Because British subjects were prohibited from providing their children with a Catholic education, recusant Catholics in the colonies and in England sent their sons to

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10 Chester Gillis, Amaturo Chair of Catholic Studies, Department of Theology, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Personal interview on January 24, 2008, Washington, D.C.

11 Raguin, *Catholic Collecting*, 56.
be educated by the Jesuits in France and Belgium. St. Omer was a school founded on the border of France and Belgium by Benedictine monks in the seventh century, and which served as the source of education for many of the Catholic lay elite in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Darnall-Digges-Carroll families sent their sons abroad so that they could be educated in the faith and be exposed to other wealthy Catholics. Sadly, Henry Carroll, Eleanor’s cousin, drowned at sea on his return from St. Omer. Upon their return to Maryland, these young men would find the political landscape of their youth much changed, as it was now focused on the new capital on the Chesapeake.

Setting the Annapolis Stage

Maryland was still very much a farming community in 1700, though the new settlement at Annapolis offered seasonal opportunities for more urbane activities. The politically motivated moving of the seat of the provincial government in 1694 from Catholic-dominated St. Mary’s City to Protestant Annapolis had profound effects in Maryland, particularly for the Darnall-Digges-Carroll family.

The English crown provided money to construct the first three significant structures in Annapolis in 1699: the State House (which succumbed to fire in 1704), King William’s School (later St. John’s College) and St. Anne’s Episcopal Church (razed in 1775), all of which were built with tax revenues.12 As the government met

seasonally, those in power maintained homes outside of Annapolis. Opportunities for capitalizing on the occasional gatherings of Maryland’s elite were few, especially in the early years of the town. A contemporary, albeit satirical, account of Annapolis describes the new capital as a backward town with little economic opportunity.\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{quote}
Up to Annapolis I went, \\
A City Situate on a Plain, \\
Where scarce a House will keep out Rain; \\
The Buildings framed with Cyprus rare, \\
Resembles much our Southwark Fair: \\
But Stranger here will scarcely meet \\
With Market-place, Exchange, or Street; \\
And if the Truth I may report, \\
'Tis not so large as Tottenham Court. \\
St Mary's once was in repute, \\
Now here the Judges try the Suit \\
And Lawyers twice a year dispute. \\
As oft the Bench most gravely meet, \\
Some to get Drunk, and some to eat \\
A swinging share of Country Treat. \\
\end{quote}

The town of Annapolis had very little to offer in terms of community at its beginning. St. Anne’s parish, the only church in Annapolis (other than the Carroll family’s house which was used as a chapel later in the eighteenth century for the growing Catholic community in Annapolis) counted 374 taxable persons on its parish

rolls in 1696. It is likely that many of those were adults who owned or rented space in one of the twenty-four houses noted later in the poem above. In the first years of such a small community, citizens would have known as new settlers arrived in town to offer their services and wares. One particularly successful Annapolitan was William Bladen (1673-1718), who emigrated from London in 1690 to St. Mary’s City, where he lived at St. Elizabeth’s Manor. Bladen established the first printing press in Annapolis in 1700, when it also was customary for the printer to be the bookseller and bookbinder. Bladen held as many as nine separate appointed positions simultaneously in his career, including the clerkships of the Lower House and of the Governor’s Council, where he recorded the work of the state house.

Interestingly, it was Bladen who signed and witnessed the December 17, 1708, bill in the Maryland General Assembly naturalizing Kuhn. Bladen was clerk of the court and attorney general from 1698 to 1707, and served on the vestry at St. Anne’s, as did Justus Engelhardt Kuhn in the year prior to his death. A possible relationship between Bladen and Kuhn might explain why 39 books were included in the inventory of the artist’s estate taken after his death in 1717. A signature on that inventory is that of the first known successful merchant, Amos Garrett (1671-1727), who served as the first mayor of Annapolis from 1708 to 1720 and kept a store in the house on Greene

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It is likely that Kuhn purchased or received at least some of his books from Garrett or Bladen.

**The Economic Climate**

A stagnation in the tobacco market began around 1700 as the supply of tobacco temporarily exceeded the demand, a situation which extended to the mid-1730s when the population of Maryland diversified beyond farming. Coupled with an increase in the number of dependent women and children per household as a logical result of the colonization of the province, the economy plummeted and then rose sharply just after the turn of the eighteenth century. Landowners, including the Darnalls, could easily have panicked in the face of such a downturn, or they could have taken measures to protect their families. It is possible that Lord Baltimore recognized the potentially devastating effects of a weak economy and an overbearing government on those families who had remained loyal to his claim to govern the province, and attempted to protect his former neighbors by ceding more land to them and their heirs. Colonel Darnall’s will was filed April 28, 1711, dividing ownership of the family’s 26,413 acres of land among Darnall’s two sons, five stepsons, and six sons-in-law, and naming

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Charles Carroll (the Settler), the husband of his daughter, Mary Darnall, as his successor in his offices and his executor. Henry Darnall, II, on the other hand, ultimately took the Oath and denied his faith, then squandered away much of his fortune, including the Woodyard, which was sold in 1728 to pay off debts. Perhaps Colonel Darnall knew enough about his son and his son-in-law to select the one who would remain constant.

No known journals or personal papers of Colonel Darnall remain at Poplar Hill, the long-time home of the Darnall descendents and the home of the last family to own the portrait of Eleanor. Colonel Darnall held a variety of offices in the colonial government, including Chancellor of Maryland (1683 – 1689), His Lordship's Agent & Receiver General (1684-1711), Rent Roll Keeper (1689-1699), Keeper of the Seal, and Colonel of the Militia. He lost his political posts in 1689 with the Protestant Revolution, but maintained his private (and lucrative) positions with Lord Baltimore. It is through government documents and transactions concerning land that we get our only sense of the man who was called the most powerful Catholic in America.

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19 Bianca Floyd, Museum Director, Poplar Hill on His Lordship’s Kindness, Clinton, MD. Phone interview on 4/14/08.

20 Hoffman, Mason, and Darcy, editors. Dear Papa, Dear Charley, The Peregrinations of a Revolutionary Aristocrat, as Told by Charles Carroll of Carrollton and His Father, Charles Carroll of
On July 10, 1701, Charles, third Lord Baltimore, out of "affection, special favor, certain knowledge and mere motion," made a gift of a tract of one thousand acres of land in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, to Charles Calvert Lazenby. On September 10, 1709, Charles Calvert Lazenby of the Parish of St. James, Westminster, made a deed of this land to Henry Darnall of Prince George's County; and on November 27 of the same year a commission as ensign in the First Regiment of Foot, or Grenadier Guards, was issued to Charles Calvert, who was promoted to lieutenant and captain on January 18, 1718, and appointed Governor of Maryland on May 17, 1720. Such quid pro quo arrangements were not unusual, and often were intended to maintain or return power and land to his fellow Catholics.

The six-page inventory of Colonel Darnall’s estate, taken after he died in 1711, offers some intriguing clues about his many possessions at Portland Manor. In addition to unusually large amounts of apparel, linen, and personal and household items, the document lists “12 picture frames [and] 12 Caesars heads.”22 Margaretta Lovell notes that sets of prints (specifically citing Caesar’s Heads) were often displayed and subsequently inventoried on the walls of the principal stairwell and in the front hallway. Prints, like furniture or pewter or slaves, were commodities that could be resold.

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Painted portraits, *when they appear at all*, are listed on inventories from this period as being stored in a closet or hung in a parlour.\(^{23}\) It is completely plausible that the portrait of Eleanor was not considered worth mentioning in the inventory of his estate because it carried no monetary value.

Further evidence of Colonel Darnall’s wealth is supplied by the one-and-a-half-page listing of items “In the Store,” including such diverse commodities as 73 pairs of men’s britches, 96 narrow howes (hoes), and 97 yards of damask, as well as nearly 100 head of cattle, 45 hogs and pigs, and 240 bushels of grain. Separate lists show that he owned 48 Negro slaves at three leased properties, 38 slaves at the Woodyard, and 18 slaves at the Dwelling house (further proof that Colonel Darnall no longer lived at The Woodyard at the time of his death). Darnall oversaw vast tracts of land that were used to grow tobacco and raise crops and animals, escalating his wealth to more than 35,000 pounds at the time of the inventory. Rooms named in this inventory include Mrs. Darnall’s room, the chamber over the parlor, and the room over the hall, showing that Portland Manor was a much smaller house than The Woodyard, a conclusion backed up by the number of slaves required at each property.

**Confronting Mortality**

In 1699 Colonel Darnall received a grant for 1,090 acres (subsequently named Portland Manor) from the third Lord Baltimore, who maintained a hunting lodge in the

same area along the Patuxent River where the Darnall, Carroll and Digges families had their manorial estates. Col. Darnall gave Portland Manor to his only child at the time by his first wife. This son, Philip, died in 1705, and his widow, Eleanor Brooke Darnall remarried. She and her second husband, William Digges, II, had their first child, Ignatius, in 1707 (Ignatius is the subject of the only signed work by Kuhn). Also in 1705, Col. Darnall’s daughter, Elizabeth, died. A tombstone in the cemetery of St. Ignatius Church in Chapel Point, Maryland, attests to her death: “To the memory of Elizabeth, Daughter of Henry Darnall and Wife of Mr. Edward Digges, Deceased May 9, 1705. May She Now Enjoy Eternal Bliss. Amen.” In 1709, Col. Darnall and his second wife, Eleanor Hatton Brooke Darnall, moved to the unoccupied Portland Manor to be near their son, Henry Darnall, II. Henry II and his wife, Anne Digges, lived at the Woodyard, adjoining Portland Manor.

It is known that Colonel Darnall traveled to England on behalf of his relative, Charles Carroll (the Settler), to carry documents to Lord Baltimore. It is plausible that on at least one of these business trips he was accompanied by Eleanor on her way to the convent school in Liège. In 1723, Carroll’s son, Charles Carroll (of Annapolis) noted in his cashbook an expenditure for ‘new years gift’ for his sisters, the same year their


names appear on the records in Liège, along with the “two Darnall sisters.” This group was most likely escorted abroad by Eleanor’s father, Henry Darnall II.26

Conclusion

As a man who had lost his first wife and two adult children, endured an economic depression, witnessed the forced departure of his strongest ally and benefactor, and relinquished control of positions that had taken him a lifetime to attain solely because of his religion, the wealthy and powerful Colonel Darnall may have been uncommonly focused on solidifying his family’s future. He had experienced great fortune and great tragedy in his life, and realized the tenuous nature of living as a Catholic in colonial Maryland. With each successive generation, the family faced the possibility of losing the closely-knit status it had attained by an astounding level of intermarriage. Colonel Darnall was 65 years old in 1710, and had far outlived the 37-year average life expectancy of a man in 1700.27 This family was exceedingly concerned with preserving its lineage and heritage. It is possible that he commissioned portraits of those family members closest to him in order to document and preserve the family pedigree. As Margaretta Lovell states, that pedigree was “…a claim their ancestresses had not been adulteresses and it was an accounting of the right and just

26 Hoffman, Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland: A Carroll Saga, 1500-1782, 103.

descent of land and money from male patriarch to rightful male heirs.” Unlike England’s law of primogeniture, in colonial America, the family was the primary unit, and was stronger as a whole than any one individual. The Darnall-Digges-Carroll family certainly cherished its lineage and preserved it in material form through the portraits they commissioned from Kuhn.

It should be no surprise that Catholics found solace in community with others who shared their beliefs and were willing to risk their fortunes, their land, their positions, and, occasionally, their lives to continue to practice their faith. A generation of Protestants had gone in search of better economic opportunities and religious freedom in Maryland, severing their ties with Europe in an attempt to establish a life free of the restrictions that caused them to flee England. The Catholics who settled in Maryland maintained ties with European traditions by sending their children abroad to be educated. Perhaps portraiture flourished as the highest genre in colonial America because there was no political history to paint in 1710 – there was no cohesive country, no common bond among the colonies, and, as yet, no Academy or infrastructure for training artists that would elevate a single message above all others.

Since colonial men could take the Oath and maintain their positions in the community while their wives and children continued to practice as Catholics, the role of women was vital in passing on their values. The portrait of Eleanor Darnall does not reflect fanciful imaginings of an immigrant painter or dreams of wealth and splendor by

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28 Lovell, Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America, 118.
the Darnalls. It is a very real manifestation of deeply held beliefs by a devout Catholic family intended to be read by others who shared their faith. Possibly commissioned after several tragic losses in his life, and at a time when the grandchildren were heading off for their educations abroad, Colonel Darnall may have been acutely aware of the tenuous nature of his family’s and his own existence. Hidden beneath the surface of the portrait is a series of coded messages that could only be read by those who had been forced to create their own underground language to express their faith. To see it as a mere likeness of a girl on a balcony with her dog is to perceive it only in passing, much as an unwelcome (Protestant) government official walking through the Woodyard might have seen it. To be invited to sit in the dining room and share a meal with the Darnall family would be an opportunity to see the details and gaze contemplatively at the large canvases which recorded the likenesses of little Eleanor and her brother, Henry. It could be said that these Catholic families “spoke” to each other and to future generations in code by hiding their faith in plain sight.

Who decided what messages would be contained in that portrait? How might an immigrant painter have acquired the necessary training and skills to be introduced to such a powerful family worlds away from his native Germany? By investigating the resources available to itinerant colonial artists, and then comparing Kuhn’s portrait of Eleanor Darnall with some of his other known works, we can next explore the question of how portrait painting may have contributed to an immigrant artist’s social mobility and acceptance in colonial America.
CHAPTER FOUR
JUSTUS ENGELHARDT KUHN

How did Kuhn, an itinerant, immigrant painter, situate himself among these prominent families in Maryland society? A closer investigation of the artist sheds light on the communities in which he and the sitter lived, and provides plausible answers to the question of how he was introduced to such a powerful family worlds away from his native Germany. By examining how portrait painting may have contributed to his social mobility, we gain greater insight into colonial American culture and the role art played in bringing the various strata of society together.

Kuhn’s Early Years

Little is known about Kuhn other than that he declared himself a German, Protestant, and a painter in his application for naturalization, which was included in the 1708 records of the Maryland Assembly. The only clue to Kuhn’s age is found in the register of St. Ann’s Church in Annapolis that records the birth of “Thomass, Son of Jost. Engl. Kiihn and Elizabeth his wife” in 1714. Assuming that Kuhn would have been between twenty to fifty years old at the time of his son’s birth, his own birth may have fallen between 1664 and 1694, making him sixteen to forty-six years old at the time of Eleanor’s portrait sitting. It is unlikely that a fourteen-year-old would have

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1 Maryland State Archives Special Collections, Microfilm records of St. Ann’s Parish, Register of births, marriages, and deaths, MSA SC 15. Viewed September 4, 2008.
been qualified to list himself as a painter or apply for naturalization in 1708, so a narrower possible age range for Kuhn at the time of the portrait’s execution might be twenty to forty-six years old.

Kuhn biographer, Dr. J. Hall Pleasants, suggests that the artist may have fled religious persecution in Germany and taken temporary refuge in England.² Given that apprentices generally were taken on at the age of 14, Kuhn could have been in London learning the English language and working as an apprentice to a painter for some portion of time between 1678 and 1708, when he first appears in the Maryland records. During that period, the most prominent German-born painter in England was Sir Godfrey Kneller (b. Gottfried Kniller, 1646-1723), who also painted the portrait of the Third Lord Baltimore, Charles Calvert (1637-1715). As noted previously, Kneller was the leading portrait painter in England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and served as court painter to five monarchs. Kneller was known for his factory of hundreds of apprentices and assistants; he is the most likely artist to have taken on Kuhn as an apprentice during this period, although no record conclusively links Kuhn to Kneller’s studio.

Records of apprenticeships can provide insight into the early influences on artists. The 1563 British Statute of Apprentices forbade anyone from entering a trade who had not served an apprenticeship. This law remained on the books until 1814, though it was

not always adhered to rigorously. No central register of apprentices was kept in England prior to Statute 8 Anne c.5 of 1710 (two years after Kuhn’s application for naturalization in Maryland), when stamp duty was payable on indentures of apprenticeships. Evidence of such apprenticeships is therefore unavailable unless kept in the records of churches or individual families or guilds.³ Many of these records have been lost or destroyed over the centuries.

Guilds date back many centuries and are still an active force in the British economy. Centralized records, where available, are maintained at Guildhall in London. The registers of the Painter-Stainers’ Company for the years 1666-1800 contain no entry for Kuhn or any of the variations of his name. There is an alphabetical list of freemen and apprentices of the Weavers’ Company for the period 1661-1706 but Kuhn’s name is not among them.⁴ These would be the two most likely apprenticeships for someone training as a painter in late seventeenth-century London. Anyone apprenticed was subject to the oath of abjuration, thereby disqualifying Catholics, Jews, and other non-conforming Protestants from such training. Since no records list his name, it is not implausible that Kuhn may have been Catholic and therefore denied an apprenticeship in England, and that he then claimed Protestantism as his faith upon his arrival in colonial America to further his career and fortunes.


Kuhn’s work is said to be influenced by that of Rubens and Van Dyck in seventeenth-century England. Without museums, painting academies, or salons, aspiring artists saw the works of the great masters through copies and prints, both of which were readily available throughout Europe. Kuhn may have had access to original works by the court painters Kneller and Van Dyck if he apprenticed with the German-born Cleyn, as posited in chapter two. As noted, Cleyn himself copied one of the best-known works of Van Dyck, *The Portrait of the Three Eldest Children of King Charles I*.

What would have precipitated Kuhn’s departure for America? Either he was unable to find work in London, a likely scenario given the number of apprentices working under Kneller alone, or he was enticed to go abroad to find his fortune there. Ship passenger records of German immigrants to colonial America in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are incomplete or non-existent. Sadly, neither Kuhn’s name nor any of its variations is included in any of the extant ship passenger lists from that period.⁵ Research through the National Archives and other sources shows that the first large group of German immigrants arrived in Philadelphia in 1683.⁶ An estimated 2,000 - 3,000 Germans, the majority of whom docked in Philadelphia or New York, settled in the colonies between 1683 and 1710. Germans had left their homeland in waves as a result of the devastation from the previous

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century’s wars and religious persecution. Recruiters representing colonial American
landowners went to this disparate collection of German kingdoms and estates to attract
workers who would farm the land and populate the vast territories ceded to the likes of
William Penn and Cecil Calvert. Prospective settlers residing in England gathered in
London’s Bloomsbury Square, where the Lords Baltimore maintained a home, to obtain
information on the new Maryland colony. Interestingly, one of the original plots in the
new city of Annapolis was named Bloomsbury Square and was initially owned jointly
by Charles Carroll and William Bladen, both likely acquaintances of Kuhn.7

As noted previously, the petition for naturalization of Justus Englehard Kitchin,
a German, passed the Maryland House of Delegates on December 15, 1708, and was
signed by William Bladen, Clerk of the Court.8 If Kuhn had had a wife at the time of
his naturalization application, her name, or at least a reference to “and wife” would have
appeared in the court documents, so it is likely that he arrived in Maryland without a
family.

**Entree to the Maryland Gentry**

Arriving in colonial Maryland at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Kuhn
would have been familiar with the European tradition of presenting letters of
introduction. A possible candidate for writing such letters to make connections among

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7 See Annapolis marker at http://www.hmdb.org/PhotoFullSize.asp?PhotoID=16124.

8 Maryland State Archives, Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, November 29-
December 17, 1709, Lib. LL, No. 64, 370.
potential colonial American clients is Sir Godfrey Kneller, the portraitist of the Third Lord Baltimore, Charles Calvert. Calvert himself could have written such a letter, particularly if he had made contact with Kuhn in Kneller’s studio on one of his trips back to England for a portrait sitting.

If, indeed, Kuhn were secretly Catholic but publicly professed his allegiance to the Protestant faith, he may have been more readily accepted by the Catholic gentry in Maryland. Even members of the Calvert and Darnall families eventually took the oath of abjuration in order to retain landholdings and lucrative positions, so some sympathies may have been extended to Kuhn. Laws in sixteenth and seventeenth century England posed a problem regarding wives and religion: the husband kept his property safe by taking the oath of abjuration acknowledging the English monarch as head of the Church. His wife, however, whose property belonged to her husband, could not be penalized for refusing to take the oath. “As complicit strategy or as genuine religious disagreement, such publicly divided English households were not uncommon.”9 By skirting this law, families were able to raise their children as Catholic under the guidance of the mother while the husband retained his property without retribution.

The last Lord Baltimore to profess his Catholic faith was Charles Calvert, who was sent by his father, Cecil, at the age of 24 to replace his uncle as Proprietary Governor of Maryland. Calvert maintained a hunting lodge in the same area near the

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Patuxent River where the Digges, Darnall, and Carroll families had their manorial estates and most likely socialized with them. Calvert’s first wife was Mary Darnall, of Herefordshire, England, in the same region where the father of Colonel Henry Darnall, Philip, had served as secretary and barrister to the first Lord Baltimore, George Calvert (c. 1580-1632). George Calvert’s second wife, Jane Lowe Sewall, was the widow of Dr. Henry Sewall, by whom they had a daughter, Elizabeth Sewall, who married William Digges (c. 1650-1697), the maternal grandparents of Eleanor.\(^{10}\) Calvert’s ties to the Catholic families of Maryland were numerous and far-reaching. Calvert made several trips back to London where he kept a home, and would have been a likely candidate for providing a connection between an apprentice (and fellow countryman) of Kneller’s and the Catholic gentry of Maryland.

A sample letter of introduction written on November 25, 1754, by Thomas Vernon to James Boutineau in Boston shows how the artist Joseph Blackburn sought and reached the community to which he moved:

I hope youl excuse the liberty I shall now take of recommending the bearer Mr Blackburne to your favor & friendship, he is late from the Island of Bermuda a Limner by professi on & is allow’d to excell in that science, has now spent some months in this place, & behav’d in all respects as becomes a Gentleman, being possess’d with the agreeable qualities of great modesty, good sence & genteel behaviour he purposes if suitable encouragements to make some stay in Boston, and will be an entire stranger there XXX, shall therefore be obliged to you or friends for any civilities you are pleased to shew him, my best Compliments with Mrs Vernons to your good lady Miss Sucky and Miss Nancy &

Such a letter would have been invaluable to anyone entering a new community and attempting to market himself and his skills. Kuhn certainly would not have been able to arrive on the scene in 1708 and have commissions from the leading families of Maryland two years later without the help of a very well-respected reference. As expected, no such letter, nor any journals, bills, or receipts remain documenting Kuhn’s work in Maryland.

Kuhn’s signature on one lone painting (that of Ignatius Digges in 1710) tells us that he was familiar with Latin, as he signed the canvas “Anno AEtatis suae 2 ½ J7J0, J. E. Kuhn Fecit.” The number one is written in the shape of an English upper-case J, indicative of high German script, the language of an educated citizen. If indeed Kuhn spent time in London learning his craft, he would have gained a working knowledge of the English language, crucial to approaching the extended Darnall family and the leading citizens of Annapolis.

Resources and Competition

A variety of sources would have been available to Kuhn in colonial America to further his techniques in drawing and painting. Among the most important English topographical publications of the early eighteenth century was Johanne Kip’s 1707 Britannia Illustrata: Or Views of Several of the Queens Palaces, as Also of the

Principal seats of the Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain, Curiously Engraven on 80 Copper Plates. Kip (1653-1722) was a Dutch engraver and print dealer who followed William and Mary (reigned 1689-1702) to London.

To learn the iconography of art, Kuhn could have turned to other printed sources. Elisabeth Roark states that Maryland’s Jesuits had a lending library of religious and devotional literature (possibly including Henry Hawkins’ 1633 *Parthenia Sacra*) that circulated among the community. Such books were intended, not for didactic purposes, but rather as aids in meditating on the Virgin Mary. ¹² It is plausible that Colonel Darnall could have instructed Kuhn to search those books for images to use in painting the four Darnall grandchildren.

The majority of colonial American portraits (33 of 50) dated between 1690 and 1710 in the National Portrait Gallery’s Catalog of American Portraits are by unidentified artists.¹³ Those seventeen with signatures or attributions are associated with twelve artists, three of whom painted exclusively in Europe. Only nine artists, including Kuhn, are known to have painted portraits in colonial America during that period, and the majority of those worked only in New England. One such example is Thomas Smith, whose work is said to have similar Baroque influences, though none of his clients is known to have lived outside New England and his work is thought to be from the period 1675-1690.¹⁴ Other early painters who may be more familiar to art

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¹³ [http://npgportraits.si.edu/eMuseumCAP/](http://npgportraits.si.edu/eMuseumCAP/).
historians were not active until after Kuhn’s death in 1717. Those artists include Nehemiah Partridge (1683-1737), who worked in the Albany-Schenectady, New York, area between 1718 and 1725, John Smibert (1688-1751), who arrived in Boston from England in 1728, and Pieter Vanderlyn (1687-1778), who was active between 1730 and 1745. As discussed in chapter two of this paper, artists such as the late seventeenth-century Freake Limner produced works very different from those of Kuhn. The Pennsylvania artist Christopher Witt is credited with a rudimentary sketch of Johannes Kelpius dating to circa 1705, though Witt’s skills were far exceeded by those of Kuhn. This body of evidence points to the remarkable conclusion that there are no extant portraits from this period that reflect the same level of artistic skills as demonstrated in Kuhn’s 1710 paintings.

It is highly unlikely that Kuhn appeared on the scene at the very moment when these Catholic families became interested in having their likenesses painted. This timing provides another reason to believe that Kuhn may have been brought to Maryland at the request of these families through their contacts with the Lords Baltimore, as posited in chapters two and three. Charles Calvert was not alone in choosing to return to England to have his portrait done by an artist with an established reputation. Most early colonists, however, either did not have the means to travel back to England for a portrait sitting, or purposely chose to have their likenesses painted

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15 http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/tbio?tperson=5847.

locally. It may be idealistic to posit that the Darnall family was helping to establish an emerging artist; more likely, they were able to dictate the terms of the painting by dealing with an artist inexperienced in the business, though not necessarily the art, of portraiture.

More revealing information about Kuhn’s work is found in the probate records of his estate, including an inventory listing “14 pictures and Landskips,” providing the first evidence of landscape paintings in colonial America. Perhaps Kuhn was the first to usher in a new form of painting, that, while not replacing portraits, offered patrons an alternative, and perhaps less expensive, way of recording their position as landholders. It is a great loss that none of those landscapes have come to light.

Equally tantalizing is the inventory’s reference to an unfinished coat of arms for Mr. Doyne. The Mr. Doyne for whom the coat of arms was crafted (though evidently neither paid for in full nor picked up by the client) may have been a descendent of William Doyne, a Catholic immigrant from Northern Ireland. His younger son, Robert Doyne, married Mary Stone, daughter of William Stone (c. 1603-1659/60), who was hand-picked by the second Lord Baltimore to serve as the first Protestant governor of Maryland. Governor Stone’s other daughter, Elizabeth, married William Calvert (1642-1682, son of Governor Leonard Calvert and nephew of Cecil, 2nd Lord Baltimore); their son, George Calvert (1668-1739?), married Elizabeth Doyne, daughter of Robert’s older brother, Joshua Doyne (1634-1698). Elizabeth Doyne’s older sister, Jane (1660-1716) married Thomas Sweringen (1665-1710), brother of Anne, who married William
Bladen. The relationship between these few powerful families continued through Joshua Doyne, who served as steward for Charles Carroll of Annapolis. Is it possible that Kuhn was commissioned to produce a coat of arms for the Doyne family who had “married up” into the elite Stone and Calvert families? It is an intriguing possibility that an immigrant artist could provide colonial Maryland families with a means of documenting their upward social mobility through landscape paintings or legitimizing such ambitious marriages after the fact with a coat of arms.

The Role of William Bladen

Kuhn’s most likely source for any books of prints brought over from England would have been the Annapolis publisher and bookseller William Bladen, who maintained a monopoly on printing. It is highly unlikely that Kuhn would have taken 39 books aboard ship when he journeyed to America, so this relationship with Bladen offers intriguing clues to Kuhn’s habits. It is interesting to note that Bladen married Anne Van Sweringen, daughter of the Dutch Roman Catholic family. A testament to his in-laws’ religious convictions is found in a fragment of a statue of the Virgin Mary that was discovered in the late seventeenth century St. Mary’s City home of Anne’s father, Garrett. Bladen would certainly have been familiar with the

17 Hoffman, Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland, 107.
18 Lawrence Wroth, A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland, 1686-1776 (Baltimore: Typothetae of Baltimore, 1922), 105.
19 http://www.loc.gov/exhibits-religion/rel01-2.html
Catholic traditions of his wife’s family, who may have had their own books or prints relating to its iconography. The Van Sweringen home in St. Mary’s City was used for the meetings of the Maryland Assembly prior to its removal to the new capital city of Annapolis, suggesting that the family was financially secure enough to own a large home even from the very beginning of the Maryland colony.

Kuhn could not have hoped to make a living in colonial Maryland solely on the basis of portraits. As mentioned previously, the inventory of his estate includes a variety of items that indicate his wide-ranging activities: “14 pictures and landskips… Coat of Arms unfinished… parcels of paint and all other things belonging to painting… brass mortar and pestle… blocks, pyramids, and globes.”20 Kuhn was likely to have taken on a variety of tasks, as did the slightly later artist, Gustavus Hesselius (1682-1755) who advertised in the September 25, 1740, edition of The Pennsylvania Gazette that he could provide “in the best Manner… viz. Coats of Arms drawn on Coaches, Chaises, &c., or any other kind of Ornaments, Landskips, Signs, Shew-boards, Ship and House Painting, Gilding of all Sorts, Writing in Gold or Colour, old Pictures clean’d and mended.”21 Unfortunately, we have no such advertisement from Kuhn to confirm his range of skills because newspapers were not printed in Maryland until 1727.22

20 Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland. December 6, 1717 Inventory of Kuhn’s belongings, Justus Engelhardt Kuhn file, reviewed on May 23, 2008.


An understanding of the origins of the press in colonial Maryland sheds light on the ways in which information was conveyed to England and throughout the colonies and provides a foundation for understanding the role of William Bladen in the colony’s early years. Maryland was the second colony (after Massachusetts) to establish a printing press. In 1685 William Nuthead set up his press in St. Mary’s City, the first capital. After his death in 1695, his widow, Dinah Nuthead, moved the press to Annapolis, though it is doubtful that she could have set the type since documents show her signature only as an ‘X’, indicating her illiteracy. A comparison of documents printed in St. Mary’s City with the first documents of the Maryland Assembly in Annapolis show that it is highly unlikely that this same press was used. A different press, probably secondhand, was purchased by William Bladen. The press was used to print records of the Assembly and public notices, as well as for individual printing purposes. Given the small size of the Annapolis population, Bladen’s shop was most likely the sole source for bookbinding and book purchases.

The early Maryland government met in Annapolis for very short sessions each year, during which petitions were read, laws considered, and judgments rendered on issues of importance to the citizens, which were then published through Bladen’s press. For example, session dates include September 27 – October 4, and November 29 – December 15, 1708, October 25 - November 10, 1709, and October 24 – November 4, 1710. These dates provide further evidence of the very small community that would
have been based in Annapolis, and point to the need for artists to travel throughout the area to receive commissions and execute paintings.

Kuhn’s reputation may have preceded him, and not always in a good light. A colorful example is recorded in a judgment of “Basterdizing” against Mary Dowlin on November 8, 1709, when a quorum was gathered in the Maryland House of Delegates. Dowlin confessed under oath that “Just Engleheard is the Father of her base born Child” for which she was fined thirty shillings, an amount received by Mr. Bladen. “Just Engleheard” was ordered to take care of the said Mary Dowlin’s child.23 It is interesting to note that this information would have been publicly available, and yet Kuhn received the commissions for a series of portraits that were completed within the next year. Perhaps such behavior was considered irrelevant to Colonel Darnall in his decision to select an artist. Or he may have been too far committed to Kuhn by late 1709 if indeed Kuhn had been brought over from Europe at Darnall’s request.

Kuhn may have realized enormous benefits as a result of his relationship with the wealthy Darnall-Digges-Carroll families. A 1718 map of Annapolis, known as the Stoddert Map, shows that Charles Carroll the Settler, favorite son-in-law of Colonel Darnall and executor of his estate, owned lots equal to nearly one quarter of the city’s total acreage.24 While the other members of the extended family purchased land and built estates near the Patuxent River (a distance of approximately 35 miles from

23 Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland. Anne Arundel County Court Judgments, Liber T.B.#2, fol. 99, November 8, 1709.

Annapolis via present roads), Carroll’s first purchase, in 1695, a year after the provincial capital was moved from St. Mary’s City, was for 180 acres of land about three miles from the boundary line of Annapolis. In 1701 he made his first purchase within the new city, a lot of one and three-quarter acres of land, which was shortly thereafter expanded by the purchase of contiguous lots. It was not until 1702 that he purchased 7,000 acres in the Maryland countryside and began building the Carroll estate at Doughoregan Manor near the Darnall estates, The Woodyard and Poplar Hill. Tax assessments on Carroll property in Annapolis record several relatively small single-story homes of approximately 40 x 24 feet, which stand in stark contrast with the inventory of Carroll’s estate in 1720 that lists seventeen separate rooms and pages of furnishings in his Annapolis plantation-style house, sited on the present location of St. Mary’s Church. According to Carroll biographer, Anne Van Devanter Townsend, it would not have been unusual for the very wealthy Carroll family to have given Kuhn the use of a house in Annapolis.²⁵ There are no records of Kuhn owning or leasing property in Annapolis, though the 1717 inventory of Kuhn’s estate lists him as being “of the city of Annapolis.” A small house would have easily accommodated items shown in that same inventory, including a featherbed, a child’s bed, and two small feather beds, along with five cane chairs, six old rush chairs, and three tables. Townsend stated that such items would have placed Kuhn above the ordinary station for a craftsman, noting particularly the education level of someone who owned 39 books.

and two flutes. Because Kuhn was an educated man, not because he was an artist, he would have been given entree to a mostly-homogeneous society of powerful white men in Annapolis.

This conclusion is backed up by Kuhn’s selection as churchwarden at St. Anne’s Episcopal Church in 1717. Only those who could financially support the church were chosen for such select positions, charged with securing the seven silver chalices and vessels of the parish, six of which are still in use today. The leadership of St. Anne’s included the wealthy and powerful of Annapolis, and Kuhn’s inclusion in this group, albeit for only a short time before his death, speaks to his position among the most respected men of the capital city.

The small, elite company of men overseeing the only church in the city included Annapolis’ first merchant, Amos Garrett, and the publisher and Clerk of the Court, William Bladen. Bladen, along with Daniel Dulany, possible subject of another Kuhn painting, were lawyers who practiced in Annapolis, as did Charles Carroll. Lacking further hard evidence, it can be surmised that Kuhn, a well-to-do, educated man who moved among the city leaders, would have had ample opportunity to come in contact with both the city’s major landowner, Charles Carroll, and his powerful father-in-law, Colonel Henry Darnall.
Conclusions

Portrait painting contributed to Kuhn’s social mobility by placing him in the company of the most powerful Catholic and Protestant leaders of Maryland. Situated in the new capital of Maryland, his prominence would have been assured by the recommendation of the leading citizens of the province. His reputation may have carried more weight than the actual quality of his painting, which has been called naïve in its execution. The complexity of his compositions and the sophistication of his symbolism continue to warrant investigation, however. It is plausible that Kuhn may have put aside his religious convictions in order to further his career, a move made by men at many levels of colonial American society to sidestep the effects of British law. By considering Kuhn’s experience, we expand our understanding of status in this formative period in our nation’s history. Piecing together the artistic, social, political, and religious cultures of early eighteenth-century Maryland, we uncover a tantalizing interpretation of Eleanor’s portrait.
CHAPTER FIVE
ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

At the time when Justus Engelhardt Kuhn painted this extraordinarily ambitious portrait, the Darnall family was at a critical juncture in its history. Decisive events were taking place, significant not just to Eleanor but to her extended family because of the impact on the family’s social, economic, cultural and religious existence. Her portrait documents this pivotal point near the end of her grandfather’s life. Colonel Darnall had single-handedly laid down roots for his extended family in a new world, and his passing would soon mark a major turning point in this small Maryland dynasty. Kuhn’s painting reflects back on those family values. It also anticipates Eleanor’s role as the only granddaughter in the bloodline at a time when her family was sending her off for her formal education. The education she was acquiring would aid enormously in her future role as protector of the family’s faith.

Kuhn responded to this opportunity by recording Eleanor’s likeness in an unusually large and detailed portrait unlike any known to have been created by his contemporaries. The painting includes intriguing symbolism that has traditionally been interpreted as placing the Darnalls alongside the grand families of Europe, enabling them to be seen as prosperous and cultured by their fellow settlers. However, specific cultural and religious values are contained in this carefully chosen composition,
intended to be read and understood by an equally selective audience of family and friends who shared their values.

There are multiple levels of narrative contained in this portrait, revealing artistic, political, and religious interpretations. In the same way that Titian captured Clarissa Strozzi in the act of becoming her future self, Kuhn alludes to the potential within Eleanor and uses the familiar image of Princess Mary to elevate the viewer’s perception of this young girl. Some of the other compelling images included in the painting are: the enclosed garden referring to the Blessed Mother; the statue of St. George, patron saint of England, standing guard over the faith, represented by the single rose; the dog symbolizing fidelity or faith, forming a clear triangle at the center of the canvas, indicating the Trinity; and that same dog, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, declaring the Darnalls’ loyalty to the Stuarts.

However, more is unknown about this portrait than is known, and that may well have been the intent of both the artist and the family who commissioned it. The iconography was intended for a specific, limited and learned audience of that era who could understand the nuances of an ambitious portrait that also included a sophisticated landscape and still life. Never intended for public consumption, Eleanor’s likeness was certainly commissioned to be viewed by trusted family members and friends who shared both the Catholic faith and the oppression that resulted from its practice.

Unquestionably, the extended Darnall family achieved their social and political status as a result of Colonel Henry Darnall’s connections with the Lords Baltimore. As
the owner of one of only sixty-three manorial estates granted in the 1634-1684 period
during which adventurers were rewarded for their relationship with the Calverts,¹
Darnall was uniquely positioned to inscribe his family name into history. The 1699
deed for 1,090 acres at Portland Manor serves as evidence of only one of the many such
rewards given by Calvert to Darnall for loyal service and familial bonds. Colonel
Darnall subsequently endured great loss, as many of those dearest to him died at young
ages, while he was forced to give up lucrative positions, land, and even the public
practice of his faith because of the tumultuous political times. It should not be
surprising that he would attempt to salvage his family’s good name by commissioning a
series of portraits of those grandchildren who would hold the future of the family in
their collective hands through what would surely be the continuation of an oppressive
era for Catholics in Maryland.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 was precipitated by several events,
including the birth on June 20, 1688 of a son to the Catholic queen, Mary of Modena.
This first son of James II assured Catholic succession in England. On orders from Lord
Baltimore, William Joseph, the Catholic governor of Maryland, required Marylanders to
celebrate the birth of the Catholic prince. Joseph then ordered members of the
Maryland Assembly to take an oath of fidelity to Lord Baltimore, which was the last
straw for many of the elected Protestant leaders. That decision caused what became
known as Coode’s Rebellion, setting off a series of confrontations that led to the

¹ National Register of Historic Places, Maryland Historical Trust, Historic Site Survey of
Portland Manor; http://mdihp.net/cfm/dsp_display.cfm?previous_image=12; accessed July 21, 2008.
removal of Catholics from nearly all elected and appointed roles in the colony, and harsh laws regulating or prohibiting outright the practice of their faith.

Religion served as a unifying force for the communities of worshippers who saw their rights as God-given, especially in the face of such adversity. Leaders of the American colonies regularly referred to their righteous resistance as blessed by God. Later in the eighteenth century, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin proposed a “Great Seal” that featured the story from Exodus of the parting of the Red Sea, surrounded by the words “Rebellion to Tyrants Is Obedience to God.” Ultimately that seal was not used, though its proposal attests to the importance of symbolism in establishing common values in revered objects.

Just as liturgical vessels used in early and medieval Christian worship were considered worthy if they were constructed of rare materials, displayed skilled workmanship, and were destined for an important function, so Eleanor was a vessel for her family’s future. Much was invested in her upbringing and education abroad to ensure that she had a solid grounding in her faith and in the rituals of her ancestors. She would be charged with continuing the Catholic heritage of the family line. Her portrait shows her covered in the finest imported laces, elaborately and expensively dressed, and turning toward her future. Unknown at the time, of course, was that she would give birth to John Carroll, the first Catholic bishop in America and the founder of Georgetown University. Without the foundation provided by his educated, cultured and

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respected mother, Carroll may well not have achieved such status through his religion. She is worthy of the role expected of her, the vessel of her family’s faith.

It is puzzling that Kuhn signed neither the portrait of Eleanor Darnall nor most of his other paintings. In the Maryland Historical Society files on the artist there is a letter to Kuhn biographer, Dr. J. Hall Pleasants, concerning the derivation of the name Engelhardt. The author of the letter, Francis Culver, registrar general for the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, responded to an inquiry from Pleasants about the artist’s unusual middle name. Engelhardt translates as “powerful messenger” (“Engel” meaning angel or messenger, and “hart” as strong or hard).3 With no record whatsoever establishing a Justus Engelhardt Kuhn in Germany, England, or the American colonies prior to 1708, one may interpret the grotesque as a marker, intended to establish himself as an artist capable of revealing layers of meaning in his work. Each of Kuhn’s three unsigned children’s portraits contains a balustrade that ends in a stone pedestal, on which is “carved” an image of an angel or a man. The one signed work (that of Ignatius Digges) includes a fountain sculptured as a cherub. Although it may have been just a witticism on the part of the artist, it is possible that these enigmatic images in stone served as Kuhn’s signature, messengers in stone, inviting the viewer to ponder the symbolism contained therein. Drawing on what may have been a classical training in the arts, Kuhn included what can be read as a herm, protecting Eleanor as she embarks on her journey to Flanders for education abroad. This may be

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3 Francis Culver to J. Hall Pleasants, December 30, 1932, Justus Engelhardt Kuhn papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD.
the mark of an artist finding his way early in his career, trying out a signature in symbols with several levels of meaning. His later portraits of adults contain no such iconography, but instead use the traditional “Aetatis suae…” to denote the sitter, and from the writing the authorship is extrapolated, eliminating the challenge of interpreting the iconography. It would be an interesting study for future scholars to investigate why Kuhn may have changed the style and composition of his portraits. A comparison of the portraits of the four children painted by Kuhn also would be welcomed by students of colonial American portraiture.

Other colonial American portraits from a slightly later period appear to reflect on the composition, manner and attributes of Kuhn’s work. Many of those pieces were painted by artists who remain anonymous today; examples held at the National Gallery of Art include the portraits of Boy in Blue Coat (c. 1730), and J. M. Stolle (c. 1734). The known artists whose compositions, line, and color appear influenced by Kuhn include Gerardus Duyckinck (1695-1746), the Gansevoort Limner (possibly Pieter Vanderlyn, active 1730-1745), and the Schuyler Limner (possibly Nehemia Partridge, active 1717-1725), all three of whom painted in upstate New York. It remains unclear how they might have learned their craft in a style similar to that of Kuhn, whose only known clients were in Maryland.

The artist whose chronology most closely matches that of Kuhn is Swedish-born Gustavus Hesselius (1682-1755), who appears suddenly on the Annapolis scene in

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1715, only two years before Kuhn’s death. Hesseliuss painted important public servants and the Maryland Catholic gentry, seeming to take over Kuhn’s role. Hesseliuss’ paintings show little artistic innovation and generally record a bust-length likeness of the sitter against a dark, often oval-shaped background. He made no attempts to bring the subject to life on the canvas, and his characters recede into their backgrounds without attributes, color or personality. These two artists are linked by their chronology and geography, as well as by their curious domination of portrait commissions by Maryland Catholics, although Hesseliuss did not confine himself to Catholics. Leonard Hollyday, subject of a c. 1740 portrait by Hesseliuss, specifically stated in his will that “At no time shall any child [of mine] be under guardianship or education of a Roman Catholic.” It would be of particular interest to art historians to learn of an as-yet undiscovered link between Hesseliuss and Kuhn. It also remains for future scholars to investigate the relationship of the four Darnall grandchildren’s portraits to each other, and to explain the dramatic shift in Kuhn’s painting style. There is a marked change from the elaborately detailed and colorful palate c. 1710 used to record the images of the children to the dark and somber bust-length portraits of adults of the same families as recorded over the next seven years.

To understand the whole picture, it is essential to examine what is both inside and outside the frame. As Eleanor’s painting attests, the history of Catholicism in early eighteenth-century Maryland is one of both oppression and determination. At a time

when these families were being tested repeatedly, one of their responses was to turn to ambitious family portraits as a means of expression. The stories of the Darnall-Diggs-Carroll families live on through the legacy of their prominent descendants and through the artwork created in such unusual numbers at a critical point in the history of both the family and the state. The country that emerged later that same century overcame British military rule and inspired generations to come with a few profound works on paper that also provoke controversy and invite interpretation centuries later.

The answers to the questions posed herein contribute to an increased understanding of this often-overlooked era in the history of America, though there is much left to be investigated. I have relied heavily on the generosity and scholarly investigations of many art historians to piece together this interpretation of Justus Engelhardt Kuhn’s portrait of Eleanor Darnall. Continued research would be welcomed by this and future generations of art lovers who continue to gaze at paintings to unlock an understanding of our past.
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Portraiture


