

# Adam Calvert Bentley and Ardgowan Antiques

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Louis XIV Portrait of Mme. de Maintenon

£1,850

A late 17th Century portrait of Madame. de Maintenon shown standing in an interior, probably at St. Cyr, holding a prayer book and richly dressed in a frock of ermine and velvet, with black fichu and lace fontange; oil on canvas, un-framed

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**SKU:** A5123

**Height:** 49.2 cm (19.25 inches) Unframed

**Width:** 36.8 cm (14.5 inches) Unframed

**Year:** French. circa 1685



Françoise d'Aubigné was born in Niort in France in 1635. Though somewhat impoverished, she was brought to court at the age of seventeen, and swiftly agreed to marry the much older, but influential, poet, Paul Scarron, which allowed her to stay within court and intellectual circles, her preferred environment. After Scarron's death in 1660, Louis XIV's mistress, Mme. de Montespan, made Françoise Scarron governess to the duc de Maine, her illegitimate son by Louis XIV. So well did she discharge her duties, that Louis XIV, in 1673, made her governess to all the royal children and, in 1674, after Louis made her a gift of money in gratefulness for her care for his children, she was able to purchase the Château de Maintenon, a name she then also took for herself when elevated to the rank of Marquise. After the *Affair of the Poisons* Mme. de Montespan fell from favour with Louis, and Mme. de Maintenon became his mistress. In late 1683 or early 1684, after the death of Queen Marie-Thérèse, she and Louis were secretly and morganatically married, probably to salve her strong religious feelings of revulsion at her position of mistress. In 1684 she founded the Maison Royale de St. Louis at St. Cyr as a place of education for well-born but impoverished girls, and it seems likely that the present portrait was painted after her marriage, as this would explain the plethora of ermine in her costume, and may show her at St. Cyr, as there appears to be a bust of St. Louis above the doorway behind her. After Louis' death, Mme. de Maintenon moved to St. Cyr, where she died in 1719, and is buried.

The Domaine de St. Cyr was built in 1685 after designs by the royal architect, Jules Hardouin Mansart, at a cost of 1,400,000 livres