

THE LIMNER COMPANY



RICHARD COSWAY (1742 - 1821)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman of the Stadion Family, with a moustache, wearing blue coat, white waistcoat and cravat

Circa: dated 1797

1797

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: H5PMN378

Oval, 3 in (78 mm) high

The reverse signed and dated by the artist; 'Rdus Cosway R A Primarius Pictor Serenissimi Walliae Principis Pinxit 1797', with notes by later owners in ink (A.S.; Nachl. Ant. Graf Stadion, Abg. Im Katalog (Legacy count Ant. Stadion))

This portrait of a young man may have been a member of the Stadion family, as it formed part of the sale in Vienna in 1917 of the State Minster's property. Johann Philipp Carl Joseph Stadion, Count von Warthausen (1763-1824). Count von Warthausen was a statesman, foreign minister, and diplomat who served the Habsburg empire during the Napoleonic Wars. He was also founder of Austria's central bank Oesterreichische Nationalbank. He was Count of Stadion-Warthausen from 1787 to 1806. The Stadion family may have met Cosway in London when the Count spent some years there between 1790-93.

Here, the sitter's most distinctive feature is his neat moustache, which would have been unusual for an Englishman to sport at this period. Very few men seem to have grown facial hair at this time – the closest example to this portrait being the later portrait of a man in Classical dress, previously thought to be Charles or John Phillip Kemble. 2

Painted the year after his only daughter Louisa's death, at the age of seven, Cosway shows his more mature and sombre style in the current portrait. As Stephen Lloyd notes, Cosway also turned more to

his 'eccentric spiritual explorations' after Louisa died, including Swedenborgianism and Mesmerism, becoming a faith healer and astrologer.³ Understandably, Cosway appears to have taken on fewer commissions in the year following Louisa's death, but began exhibiting again in 1798, as well as being a member of the Hanging Committee for the Royal Academy.

Maria Cosway was similarly engaged during this time of mourning, particularly in learning the art of engraving. In the year this portrait was painted by her husband, she etched a portrait of Sir Sidney Smith after Phillippe Hennequin.⁴ The International reach of the Cosway's was renowned and it should be no surprise to conclude that the current sitter was a member of a distinguished Austrian family.