THE LIMNER COMPANY



JOHN SMART (1742 - 1811)

Portrait miniature of a Young Boy in crimson coat and matching waistcoat, white cravat and lace-frill shirt

Circa: 1764

1764

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration Number: VQQ8VBJ6

Signed with initials and dated 1764

Gilt metal mount

Oval, 1 3/8 in. (35mm.) high

Born in London, Smart soon proved to be one of Britain's most prolific portrait miniature painters of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. He first trained at William Shipley's drawing academy in London from 1755 before building his own successful practice by 1770. In 1771, he became director of the Society of Artists, an organisation dedicated to exhibiting contemporary British Art, whose previous members included Francis Hayman (1708-1776) and Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792). Smart would go on to become the president of the society in 1778.

The present miniature was created during a period of Smart's career when he was building his way up through the Society of Artists. Gentle in its depiction of this young sitter, Smart's characteristic razor-sharp observational painting describes the soft texture of the scarlet velvet jacket against the crisp, white lace of the shirt frill to perfection. As with so many of Smart's portraits, the present work is testament to Smart's skill, not only in painting but also in draughtsmanship. His preparatory drawings for miniature portraits have become important pieces of art in their own right, but would have aided him in creating a seamless depiction of detail on such a small scale.