

THE LIMNER COMPANY



HENRY SPICER (1743 - 1804)

Portrait enamel of an Infantry Officer, facing right in scarlet coat with yellow facings and lapels bearing silver lace loops, frilled cravat, powdered hair en queue

Circa: circa 1785

circa 1785

Enamel

Oval, 2½ in. (64 mm.) high

Gold fausse-montre frame with bright-cut border, the reverse with plaited hair

Henry Spicer, miniaturist, enamel painter and engraver, was born in Reepham, Norfolk in 1742. He studied under Gervase Spencer and later became the teacher of William Birch (1755-1834), an artist who is believed to have introduced the practice of enamel portraiture to America. He was a member of the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain and was appointed secretary in 1773.

In 1770 he was elected a member of the Society of Antiquaries and exhibited for the first time at the Royal Academy in 1774. He later relocated to Dublin where he lived for several years, returning to London in 1782. A true testament to Spicer's success was his acquisition of the title 'Official Painter in Enamel' to the Prince of Wales in 1789.

Spicer was well-connected in the art world, with artists such as George Stubbs and Ozias Humphry included within his circle. In fact, after Spicer's death in 1804, Humphry would go on to lodge with Spicer's widow until his own death in 1810.

The current portrait of an officer dates to circa 1785, showing Spicer's skill in emulating artists such as Richard Cosway who were painting the wealthy, fashionable sector in watercolour miniatures at this

date. Unlike Cosway's works on ivory, Spicer's enamels have not faded and present a (literal) vivid portrayal of the characters of the later eighteenth century.