

THE LIMNER COMPANY



Attributed to THOMAS DAY (c.1732 - 1807?)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman wearing a brown coat, a pink and white striped waistcoat, frilled cravat, his hair worn en queue

Circa: circa 1780

circa 1780

Watercolour on ivory (licence AGGSC8AT)

Oval, 1 5/8 in (42 mm) high

Gold bracelet clasp frame with brooch attachment, the reverse with opaline enamel and an aperture to reveal brown hair

Thomas Day's biography has been somewhat confused and few facts are known for certain. Daphne Foskett records that he was said to have been born in Devon, and later gave various London addresses and one in Brentwood, Essex, when he exhibiting at the Royal Academy.[1] He exhibited between 1773-1788, and painted landscapes as well as miniatures, and crayon drawings.

There are few extant signed works by Day, and, as a consequence, his miniatures are difficult to attribute firmly. Some of examples can be found in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The present miniature is evidence, however, that he was an extremely capable artist. It is a well-preserved example, and shows a crisp style and fresh palette, making this a vibrant portrait for the period.

This portrait is dateable by the gentleman's costume to circa 1780, just prior to the moment when men's fashion became more pared-back in silhouette and sober in colour toward the end of the eighteenth century. An eye-catching waistcoat, as seen here, became a mainstay in men's fashion in the 1780s - the last vestige of the extravagant eighteenth-century fashion, which stood as a focal point against the new, plainer coats and breeches. Aileen Ribeiro cites the Gentleman's and London Magazine (1777), noting that 'an entire suit of cloth is hardly ever seen except upon old people, physicians, apothecaries and lawyers'.[2] Stripes were a particularly popular pattern, especially in France where Louis-Sébastien

Mercier wrote in his *Tableau de Paris* (1787) that the king's zebra was a source of inspiration: 'coats and waistcoats imitate the handsome creature's markings as closely as they can.'[3]

[1] Foskett, D., *Miniatures: Dictionary and Guide* (Antique Collectors' Club), 1987, pp.289-300

[2] Ribeiro, A., *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1715-1789* (Yale University Press, New Haven & London), revised edition 2002, pp.212-213

[3] *Ibid*, p.208