THE LIMNER COMPANY



GEORGE ENGLEHEART (1750 - 1829)

Portrait miniature of John Woods, wearing a blue coat, white waistcoat and white cravat, against a sky background

Circa: circa 1791-1801

circa 1791-1801

Watercolour on ivory (licence RGJ7Z5NB)

Signed ‘E’, lower right

Gold frame with braided hair concealed on the reverse

A ‘Mr Wood’ is recorded to have been painted in 1791 and 1801, and a ‘Mr Woods’ painted in 1793, in Engleheart’s fee book.

This portrait by the prolific miniaturist, George Engleheart, is more subdued than some of his other works. Here, we find a ‘John Woods’, sat wearing a blue coat and a white cravat, with a simple hairstyle. In his fee book, Engleheart had recorded painting a ‘Mr Wood’ in both 1791 and 1801, and a ‘Mr Woods’ in 1793. It has not been possible to identify exactly who the sitter is, but it can be seen that this example would have been from the artist’s later working period, given this simplicity, compared to the flamboyance of his earlier works.

Despite this, the present miniature does not lack charm, and still remains as evidence of how skilled Engleheart was at creating a sense of expression and character within his depictions. ‘Mr Woods’, whoever he is, looks to be a kind man, a sense conceived through the softness of his expression and the delicate nature through which the artist has handled features such as his face and his eyes.

This calming and gentle expression would have been fit for the likely purpose of this miniature- as an

intimate keepsake for a loved one. The reverse of the miniature adds to the likeliness that this would have been its purpose, and reveals hair work. Dark brown hair has been inserted, plaited, into the back of the frame. This could have been the sitter's hair, or the hair of another, but would have been intended to remind whoever was holding the miniature of a specific person, and was a strong tradition within miniatures of the period.