

THE LIMNER COMPANY



JOHN HAZLITT (1767 - 1837)

Portrait miniature of Frederick Sylvester North Douglas (1791-1819) as a child, standing in a landscape, wearing blue jacket and buff-colour trousers, a hat trimmed with feathers by his side

Circa: Circa 1795

Circa 1795

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: UCHS8VZY

Inscribed verso 'Master Douglas, Painted by J. Hazlitt no. 6 Suffolk Street, Middlesex Hospital'

Gilded mount within papier-mâché frame

14.5 x 11 cm (5 ³/₄ x 4 ³/₈ inches)

Portrait miniatures by John Hazlitt, elder brother of the essayist and critic William Hazlitt, are rare. This may be partly due to the early part of his career as an artist based in America, where the Hazlitt's moved from England in 1783. Returning to the UK in 1786, Hazlitt immediately settled in London and attempted to ignite his career by studying under no less an artist than Sir Joshua Reynolds. Politically, Hazlitt also aligned himself with radicals such as William Godwin (husband of early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and father of novelist Mary Shelley).

John also taught his brother William to paint, as they lived together, with William showing some aptitude. John, in turn, was closely acquainted with William's circle of politically radical friends. The lack of a single vote from Royal Academicians, when John applied to become an Associate, may have been due to the scathing criticism levelled on the institution by his brother. John, however, continued to exhibit his work there until 1819, having started in 1788.

Frederick Sylvester North Douglas (1791-1819) was the only son of Sylvester Douglas, Baron Glenbervie, and the Hon. Catherine Anne North, eldest daughter of Lord North, 2nd Earl of Guilford. He was educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford, where he obtained a first class in classics. He was MP for Banbury 1812-19. He was the author of *An Essay on certain Points of Resemblance between the Ancient and Modern Greeks* (London, 1813). Many of Hazlitt's portrait commissions came from his circle of friends, and it is possible that one of these was the sitter's father Baron Glenbervie, who around this time was elected to the British House of Commons and as a Fellow of the Royal Society of London. His son (the subject of this portrait) predeceased him by four years.

Painted around the age of four, this portrait of Master Douglas is unusual in Hazlitt's oeuvre. Described by his contemporaries as 'irritable'[2], Hazlitt would not have been the first choice of artist to paint a young child. The opportunity to paint such a substantial miniature, with a landscape background, may have been of artistic appeal to Hazlitt.

A half-length version of the present portrait, given to Henry Burch (but more likely by Hazlitt) was sold from the collection of Jack D. Goetze, Sotheby's, 25 November 1974, lot 46. There is also an annotated etching in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, which confirms the sitter's identity. The sitter was also drawn by Ingres in 1815 during a trip to France (later engraved).

[1] Sylvester was the great-great uncle of Edith & Francis Sitwell by marriage.

[2] Obituary of John Hazlitt, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1837.