THE LIMNER COMPANY



JOHN SMART (1742 - 1811)

Portrait miniature of a Miss Goulburn, wearing a décolleté blue dress, her brown hair worn upswept

Circa: 1776

1776

4 cm (1 $^{5}/_{8}$ inches)

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration no: 7SNN66RE

Gold frame

Signed and dated, ‘J.S. / 1776’

This sitter can be identified by a named preparatory drawing previously in the collection of the artist’s great-grandson, William Henry Bose Esq. [1] Miss Goulburn, as well as a Mr Goulburn (presumably the sitter’s father), are also recorded in Daphne Foskett’s monograph on the artist. [2]

It has not been possible to find a certain identity for ‘Miss’ Goulburn in the records, but the sitter was possibly Sarah Goulburn, sister of Munbee Goulburn (1756-1793), who in 1782 was married to Susannah, daughter of William Chetwynd, 4th Viscount Chetwynd, and his wife Susannah Cope.

Smart’s preparatory drawings were likely left in the artist’s studio after his death. Many were still in the possession of Smart’s descendants until being sold at auction in the early 20th century. Unlike Smart’s finished miniatures, the drawings are often inscribed with the sitters’ names and are a valuable source for art historians.

This well-preserved portrait shows Smart exploiting the medium of watercolour on ivory to full effect. This young subject's skin has a luminescent quality which can only be achieved through the most masterful technique on ivory. On close examination, the faintest lilac undertones and a subtle pink blush on her cheeks make up the much-desired alabaster complexion of the age.

[1] By whom the drawing was sold at Christie's London, 15 February 1937, lot 23. It was then offered by Thomas Agnew & Sons Ltd (no.9069), before being recorded in Christie's Orchardleigh Park sale, 21-22 September, 1987, lot 335.

[2] Foskett, D., John Smart: The Man and His Miniatures (Cory, Adams & Mackay, London), 1964, p.67.

Literature:

Foskett, D., John Smart: The Man and His Miniatures (Cory, Adams & Mackay, London), 1964, p.67.