

# THE LIMNER COMPANY



**ENGLISH SCHOOL (19th century)**

**Eye miniature mounted in a mourning ring**

Circa: Circa 1809

Circa 1809

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: ST8RJTTC

Set under a glass panel in a border of pearls, relieved in black and white enamel. No assay marks, size O1/2 I".

Inscribed on the reverse, 'Dame Ann Rose Died 6th Nov 1809 A55'.

Depictions of single eyes, within jewellery and personal items that could be worn, have been created throughout history. However, this particular example dates from a period in which this was a particularly popular and there are many examples of eye miniatures mounted in jewellery in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection.

The inscription commemorates Dame Ann Rose, who can be identified in the records as living in Walworth, which was at the time on the outskirts of London, and appears to have been a wealthy woman. Mourning rings were known to her, and she ordered twelve to be created upon her mother's death in 1806. However, the unnaturalistic appearance of the eye depicted in this miniature makes it unlikely to represent a sitter observed from life.

The eye depicted here appears to have more in common with eyes in ancient Egyptian art. The heavily outlined eye and very dark, stylised eyebrow appear kohled in the cosmetic fashion of ancient Egyptian women. Interest in Egyptology developed at the end of the eighteenth-century, partly due to Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798-9). The first volumes of *Le Description de l'Égypte* (The Description of Egypt) were published 1809, and one theory is that the eye depicted could represent the wearer's - or the deceased Dame Ann's - interest in the subject.

The gold and black enamel ring on which this miniature is mounted is clearly a piece of mourning jewellery. The pearls set around the miniature could often represent tears in this context.