

THE LIMNER COMPANY



RICHARD CROSSE (1742 - 1810)

Portrait of Frances Hart, later Lady Milman (1754/5-1836)

Circa: Circa 1779

Watercolour on ivory

Registration number U2GC5THS

Oval, 90mm (3.5ins) high

Lady Milman was the wife of Sir Francis Milman (1746-1821), a physician who would eventually become the physician-in-ordinary to George III in 1806. It is thought that this miniature was painted around the time that the pair was married, in 1779, and that Crosse charged 15 guineas for the commission. It is an unusually large miniature for the period – a skill that Crosse would use in several important commissions, including a portrait of Maria, Duchess of Gloucester and his own self-portrait in the Victoria and Albert Museum, painted the year after the present work (<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O82121/self-portrait-portrait-miniature-crosse-richard/>). [1]

Frances was the only daughter of William Hart of Stapleton and brought up seven children with Francis. Of these children, Henry (1791-1868) went on to become the historian and Dean of St Pauls, known now for his poetry. Here, Crosse has depicted her with a large up-do, definitive of the styles of the 1780s. Not only does she have a large feather and pearls in the top of her wig, but this has also been braided with a scarf, or piece of fabric, which falls over her right shoulder. Decorations like these were known as 'pouf' and could be taken much further than is shown in this portrait.

Known as one of the most skilled miniaturists of his time, this is a fine example of the work of Richard Crosse. He had begun miniature painting as a hobby, and soon found himself exhibiting at the Royal Society, Royal Academy, and the Free Society. Being unable to hear or speak, this did not stop him from obtaining commissions from important members of the gentry, including the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cumberland.

[1] This was sold Sotheby's 4 July 2019 as a portrait of Maria, Duchess of Gloucester and Edinburgh (1739-1807) with her son, William Frederick, later 2nd Duke of Gloucester and Edinburgh (1776-1834), 1779

Watercolour and bodycolour on ivory, black stained wood frame. It measured a significant 172 by 134 mm., but the strain on such a large piece of ivory was evidenced by a crack which ran down the side of the portrait.

Literature:

Country Life, 14th November 2018, p.215, illustrated