THE LIMNER COMPANY



GEORGE ENGLEHEART (1750 - 1829)

Portrait miniature of an Elderly Gentleman, wearing a powdered bag wig and red coat and waistcoat, with white stock and cravat

Circa: Circa 1775

3.5 cm (1 $^{3}/_{8}$ inches)

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: CFPSQWF9

Gold bracelet clasp frame, with later loop addition

This portrait of an elderly gentlemen was painted with careful observation by a young George Engleheart, and provides the wearer (it is still set in the original bracelet clasp frame) with an incredibly lifelike depiction of a loved one. The remarkable technical skills demonstrated by Engleheart here are closely aligned with those of John Smart (1742-1811), who he would have known through the closely connected network of artists living and working in Georgian London. Every wrinkle is portrayed in the present portrait, the sitter's bright blue eyes peer from under hooded lids and he appears to have lost most of his teeth. There is a dignity in the formal wig, but the distinct white powder line at the side of the sitter's face and the fallen powder on his burgundy jacket (cut in a style fashionable a decade earlier) give a naturalistic touch. Although the sitter is unknown, facial similarities have been pointed out between this portrait and the musician James Nares (1715-1783), however the gentleman in the present portrait seems older than Nares would have been in the mid-1770s.

George Engleheart was just nineteen when he entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1769. Here he would excel and embark upon an illustrious career in miniature painting. He became miniature painter to George III when the role was vacated by the death of his friend Jeremiah Meyer in 1789. Many of his works that are known today can be traced within his own accounts of painting, in the form of a fee book

that has been transcribed numerous times. The care given to every portrait he painted (an estimated 4,853 miniatures over a 39 year career) is astonishing given he was working around 70 hours a week (the time it took to paint a miniature is fairly well documented - typically around 35 hours for a head and shoulders portrait).