

# THE LIMNER COMPANY



**RICHARD COSWAY (1742 - 1821)**

**Mary Anne Magaret (née Osborn) and Johnson Wilkinson**

Circa: circa 1782

circa 1782

*Watercolour on ivory (licence WEG4JKGQ)*

Ovals, both 25mm (1 in) high

Both in gold clasp frames, with details of their marriage inscribed on the reverse

Given the inscription on the reverse of these miniatures, it is likely that they were painted to commemorate the marriage of Mary Anne and Johnson Wilkinson in 1782. More is known about the life of Mary than her husband, as she was the daughter of Robert Osborn, Chief Clerk of the Admiralty and Commissioner of the Navy, of Chicksands Priory, Bedfordshire. Though not unknown, pairs of miniatures like the present example are rare for the work of Cosway. The pair are extremely small, and could be held within the palm of the owner's hand. Presumably each one of the couple kept the other's small portrait, making them a clear example of the intimate and romantic nature of the portrait miniature.

Cosway had entered the RA schools only 13 years before these miniatures are presumed to have been painted, in 1769. Throughout his career he remained a fashionable miniaturist and having portraits painted by him was sought after, especially given that he was employed as the miniaturist to the Prince of Wales in 1786.