THE LIMNER COMPANY



WILLIAM WOOD (1769 - 1810)

An Officer wearing the uniform of an auxiliary infantry or artillery unit; circa 1793-1816

Circa: Circa 1793-1816

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: ERWZF2BV

Gilt Metal Frame

Oval, 77mm (3 ⅛ in) high

The sitter of the present work wears the uniform of an auxiliary infantry, or possibly artillery, unit. Auxiliary units of the cavalry, infantry and artillery were raised in the period in which this miniature was painted for home defence in order so that the regiments of the regular army could be deployed abroad. Though the sitter remains unidentified, some features of his uniform may help identify his regiment. His shoulder-belt plate (which can be seen towards the right of the composition, on his white belt) appears to feature the Prince of Wales's Feathers. This symbol implies that the officer may have served in a unit from Wales, where the badge is most often featured in uniforms, or in one that used the sub-title 'Prince of Wales's'. It has been suggested that this gentleman would have been an officer of Volunteer Infantry or Artillery, rather than one of Militia or Fencibles.

William Wood trained at the Royal Academy Schools, and before his rather premature death, became a founding member of the Society of Associated Artists in Watercolour. His works can often be identified in their background, which tends to fade into a dark brown or black towards the bottom of his portraits. Wood created texture within these backgrounds using short strokes of colour, which create a cross-hatched appearance in places. During his career, the artist made the effort to record the names of most of his sitters, and these can be found within a manuscript at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

We are grateful to Stephen Wood for assisting in the identification of the uniform.