

THE LIMNER COMPANY



WILLIAM WOOD (1769 - 1810)

Portrait miniature of a Lady, possibly Mrs Bardsley, wearing a white dress, with white and blue striped sleeves, her hair worn up and powdered, with a gold necklace

Circa: Circa 1790s

Watercolour on ivory (licence number: JPAHHK7N)

Oval, 3 in. high

Historically, this miniature has been associated with the names of Mrs Bardsley or Miss Bell. It is probable that these names came from research associated with the previous, untraced, sale. When it comes to the work of William Wood, there is an extensive set of manuscripts in the Victoria and Albert Museum, written by the artist himself, which numbers and describes over 1200 of his portraits. It is likely that the present miniature matches the description of these two sitters within the manuscript.

Unfortunately, there is no other trace of this miniature. Given the apparent age of the sitter, it seems more sensible to suggest that she is Mrs Bardsley, and that this miniature may have been painted to record her marriage in the 1790s. Her dress is very typical of the period, especially the striped sleeves, which show influence from the fabric made popular in the previous decade. Her hair is also powdered, an indication that this portrait was not taken after the turn of the nineteenth century, at which point this style had become less fashionable. There are no visual records of portraits of any Mrs Bardsley, though in Wood's records, she is listed as being from Manchester.

The dating of the miniature is based on its style, which closely matches that of another portrait of a Lady, called Dorothy Mackenzie, from circa 1790. At this point, Wood was at a very early stage in his career, having enrolled at the Royal Academy Schools in 1785.

As shown by the sheer number of miniatures he records in his Memorandum, Wood went on to paint many different sitters throughout his career. He was also a member of numerous artists' societies, in

which he exhibited, including the Society of Painters in Water Colours, and a breakout society from this, which came to be known as the Associated Artists in Water Colours, of which he was a president. Wood also had an interest in landscape gardening and published an essay on the subject (An Essay on National and Sepulchral Monuments) in 1809.