

THE LIMNER COMPANY



JOHN DOWNMAN (1749 - 1824)

A portrait miniature of a Lady, wearing white dress with pale pink sash

Circa: circa 1790

circa 1790

Watercolour on ivory

Oval 65mm (2 1/2 in) high

John Downman rarely ventured into painting watercolour miniatures on ivory. Miniatures required more laborious work than the small chalk and watercolour portraits for which he gained a loyal, and fashionable, following. His work on ivory does, however, follow the same distinct look of his works in pastel, particularly in his treatment of the drapery.

The present work is a well-preserved example of his work in watercolour, with the pink flush of the sitter's face almost completely unfaded. Painted in the early 1790s, this example can be seen to date from the height of his career, when the most influential persons of the day wished to be drawn by Downman.

After a long and successful spell in the capital, Downman became something of a peripatetic artist, moving from Cambridge to London and with periodic spells in the West Country. From about 1804 he lived at West Malling in Kent and from 1806 to 1807 in Exeter. Thereafter he was based in London, but made trips to Northumberland and Yorkshire (1811 and 1812) and to

Oxford (1814, 1818). He exhibited publicly for the last time in 1819 and retired to Chester in the same year. He then moved to back to his birthplace of North Wales, where he died in 1824.