

THE LIMNER COMPANY



RICHARD COSWAY (1742 - 1821)

A young Gentleman, wearing mint green coat with silver edging, his hair powdered

Circa: Circa 1770

Watercolour on ivory (license number A7UCPCVQ)

Gold-plated locket frame

Oval, 1 ½ in (3.8cm) high

This delicate portrait of a young man was painted by Cosway around the time he was made an associate of Royal Academy and then a full academician the following year. Cosway must have been a precocious child, training at the new Shipley's Academy from the age of twelve or thirteen and exhibiting a portrait of his master, William Shipley, with whom he lived, in 1760 at the age of eighteen.

He may have wanted to rival artists such as Sir Joshua Reynolds in oil portraiture but in fact worked in miniature early on, often portraying his sitters in both mediums (unlike Reynolds). Around the time the present work was painted he rented a studio and house just off Piccadilly in the heart of fashionable Mayfair. This set the tone for his career, as he was then visited by a stream of wealthy sitters, keen to have Cosway show them portrayed in the latest styles, painted in his characteristic hand.

Cosway's social climbing paid off and in 1786 he was made 'Miniature Painter to the Prince of Wales'. They became close friends, and certainly gained Cosway many patrons, until the Prince became Regent in 1811 and the artist fell from favour.

The meticulous detail shown here in this portrait is characteristic of early in his career, when he worked in a manner much closer to that of his old school associate John Smart (1742-1811).

