

THE LIMNER COMPANY



GEORGE ENGLEHEART (1750 - 1829)

Portrait miniature of a Lady, with the initials 'AB', wearing white dress with frilled collar, her hair powdered

Circa: circa 1780s

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Watercolour on ivory (licence ADLWD6M4)

Oval, 57mm (2 ¼ in) high

Original gold frame with fausse montre top, the reverse with seed pearl monogram 'AB' set on blue glass panel, surrounded by locks of hair and gold wire on opalescent glass

Painted during the 1780s, it is likely that the commission from Engleheart was to secure an engagement for the young lady painted. By this date, Engleheart was well-practised and well-known – in fact, he was overrun with commissions - his fee book records almost thirty sittings on some days.

Born at Kew, Engleheart enrolled in the Royal Academy schools in 1769, after a period working with the landscape painter George Barret. Once an independent miniaturist, Engleheart enjoyed virtual overnight success and from 1775 ran one of the most successful studios in the country. His careful draughtsmanship combined with rapid drawing from life make his portraits some of the most lively and attractive from the period.

He attracted wealthy and important clientele and by 1776 had already painted George III several times (he would paint the king over twenty-five times during his career). In 1789, on the death of Jeremiah Meyer, he was officially appointed miniature painter to the king.

Engleheart often flattered his sitters with large, beautiful eyes. His sitters were often fashionable ladies

– here, the mysterious sitter ‘AB’ wears a fashionable light coloured, likely cotton gown, with a high ‘fichu’ covering her chest for the sake of modesty.