THE LIMNER COMPANY

RICHARD CROSSE (1742 - 1810)

Portrait of a Gentleman in military-style dress, his scarlet jacket with silver braid, his cream waistcoat with blue embroidery, his powdered hair worn en queue

Circa: circa 1770

circa 1770

Watercolour on ivory (licence DYTNHAS1)

Oval, 1 ⅕ in (31 mm) high

Gilt-metal frame with beaded edge

The miniature here is an outstanding example of the work of esteemed British artist Richard Crosse (1742–1810). It is close in quality to the work of his contemporary John Smart (born 1741), who was renowned for his ability to describe texture and details in his miniatures.

Crosse (1742–1810) was born on 24 April 1742 at Knowle, near Cullompton, Devon as the second son of John and Mary Crosse. Crosse was born deaf and non-verbal, but this did not hold him back in the slightest. Although he initially painted miniatures as a hobby, by the age of sixteen, he had been awarded a premium by the Society of Arts. He then moved to London where he studied at William Shipley's academy and the Duke of Richmond's Gallery, centres of education attended by other renowned artists like miniaturist Richard Cosway (1742-1821). Before being made a member of the Incorporated Society of Artists in 1763, Crosse exhibited there in 1760. He also exhibited multiple times at the Free Society of Artists in 1761-6 and the Royal Academy in 1770-96.

Crosse had an impressive list of clients that included George, Prince of Wales, later King George IV (1762-1830), Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester (1743-1805), and Prince Henry Friedrich, Duke of Cumberland (1745-1790). In 1789, Crosse was appointed Painter in Enamel to King George III (1738-1820), and an example of the work he did for the king is currently on loan to the Victoria & Albert Museum. While his title referred to his ability to work in enamel, many of Crosse's most well-known

miniatures were executed in watercolour on ivory, including the current miniature and the aforementioned portrait of King George III.

In addition to these royal patrons, Crosse worked for many members of nobility and high society, as well as military officers. Although he has not yet been identified, the man depicted in this miniature would have undoubtedly belonged to this polished group of distinguished individuals, as evidenced by his ability to afford this commission and his elegant fashions in the portrait. Despite the reminiscence of his outfit to that of a military man, it is more likely that the sitter is following the trend which aped military uniform at this period. This craze was taken up by both sexes – for women, it was useful to adapt a male style of dress for riding. Here the sitter wears his scarlet coat with silver braid, akin to that worn by officers – albeit here it seems to be edged with diamonds. His silk waistcoat has been carefully painted by Crosse – the embroidery stitching seen through the sheer lace frill of the sitter's cravat.