THE LIMNER COMPANY



WILLIAM WOOD (1769 - 1810)

Portrait miniature of a Lady, traditionally called Dorothy McKenzie, wearing a white dress with an upright collar, pearl necklace and shoulder band, white powdered hair, and a hoop earring; circa 1790

Circa: Circa 1790

Circa 1790

5.7 cm (2 $^{1}/_{4}$ inches)

Watercolour on ivory (license 6V3ZB21R)

Identified through a photographic record of this miniature when it was in a previous collection, Dorothy McKenzie's life is not well-documented elsewhere. It is possible that William Wood, who recorded his paintings and commissions in notebooks[1], recorded the name of the sitter when the miniature was painted and that the previous owner had access to this information. The only published version of these notebooks, an appendix, Dr. G. C. Williamson's The Miniature Collector, does not list McKenzie's name, however.

There are some intriguing elements to the clothes and accessories that our sitter wears, one of those being the large, upright collar. This appears to be starched, rather than worn down, as was the usual fashion of the period. This bears some resemblance to the 'vandyke' collars commonly worn in the period, but does not have such deep scallops or edges as these usually had. Furthermore, McKenzie wears a singular hoop earring. Earrings were worn by women in this period, however, this style is somewhat unique, the colour indicating that it is made from a precious stone, rather than a simple silver or gold.

William Wood was born in Suffolk and entered the R.A. schools at the age of 16. In the years after this miniature was painted, his career would continue to develop, culminating in him becoming the president of the society of the Associated Artists in Watercolour (1808-9). His portraits of both men and women

can be held as some of the finest examples of miniature painting of his period. And, if his talent in this form wasn't enough, he was also known to enjoy landscape gardening, and favoured painting just watercolours later on in his career.

[1] Held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, MSL/1944/433.