THE LIMNER COMPANY



GEORGE ENGLEHEART (1750 - 1829)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman, wearing a blue coat with a high collar, a white striped waistcoat, white shirt and frilled cravat, his powdered wig worn 'en queue'

Circa: circa 1785

circa 1785

Watercolour on ivory (licence SEF31126)

Oval, 45 mm. (1 ¼ in.) high

Gold mount

This portrait miniature of an elder gentleman is a well-preserved example by George Engleheart, ‘one of the great miniature painters of the eighteenth century’.[1] Where some of Engleheart’s miniatures have faded in the flesh tones, this one shows a distinct flush on the sitter’s cheeks. The gentleman’s red cheeks must have been a distinguishing feature, as, unlike his contemporary John Smart (1741-1811), Engleheart was not prone to including characteristics some might consider unflattering. Also unusually naturalistic for Engleheart was the decision to depict the sitter’s short hair poking out beneath the wig above his left ear. These features attest however to the intimate nature of the portrait miniature format, which was intended to capture the true likeness of a loved-one.

The size of this miniature is also indicative of its function as a personal keepsake, which would have been worn or kept in a pocket.[2] Miniaturists of the 1760s, ‘70s, and early ‘80s worked on ivories the same size as the present example, or even smaller. This size could easily be worn like jewellery on the body. As the century progressed, ivories became bigger and would have been much too cumbersome to wear; Engleheart’s later works near consistently measure over 3 inches in height.

[1] Foskett, D., *British Portrait Miniatures*, 1968 (Hamlyn), p.120

[2] George Engleheart was also one of few miniaturists known to have produced tiny eye miniatures, or ‘lovers’ eyes’.