THE LIMNER COMPANY



GEORGE ENGLEHEART (1750 - 1829)

Portrait miniature of a Lady, traditionally identified as Mrs Aitchison, wearing white dress

Circa: circa 1807

circa 1807

Watercolour on ivory (licence 1XFH9EG9)

Oval, 85mm (3 $^{3}/_{8}$ in) high

Signed ‘E’ obverse

Inscribed and dated ‘G Engleheart / Pinxit/ 1807’ on the reverse

When sold in 1971, this portrait was paired with a miniature of Mr. Aitchison, sometimes called Captain Aitchison. There are no other portraits with which to confirm the identity of these sitters, and no Aitchison was recorded to have been painted by Engleheart in 1807 in his fee book. The 1971 cataloguing of these miniatures also suggests that this pair are instead a Mr and Mrs Inglis, recorded as sitters by Engleheart in his fee book in 1806. This information may have been inferred from the other members of the Inglis family being sold from the same collection, though no members of the family were of the correct age to appear as they do in these miniatures in 1807.

Given the miniatures were sold by a member of the Aitchison family, it is assumed that this identification has been attached to the pair for a long time. It is therefore likely that the young woman painted here by Engleheart was indeed the wife of Captain Aitchison; the fact that the miniatures of the two were painted in the same year suggests that they marked their marriage.

Engleheart always painted his sitters in the most fashionable clothes of their period, and for this reason, alongside his marked change in style, it is possible to date many of his works without a signature. The present example is signed and dated by the artist on the reverse, in a manner adopted by him around the turn of the century and continued into the 1810s. When this miniature was painted, Engleheart had

developed an impressive reputation as one of the finest miniature painters of his day. His work is recorded in-depth in a fee book, of which G. Williamson published a transcription in 1902.

This depiction of a young Mrs Aitchison is particularly distinctive in the fact that Engleheart has painted her with her lips slightly parted, revealing some of her front teeth. This is not a feature painted commonly by miniaturists but adds to the charm and fleeting nature of the portrait, as if she has just opened her mouth to make a comment to Engleheart as he paints her. As a small detail within the portrait, it forms a perfect example of the way in which Engleheart became a master of the art of the miniature.