

THE LIMNER COMPANY



WILLIAM HOPKINS CRAFT (1730 - 1811)

Enamel of 'Poor Maria', showing a melancholy woman in a landscape, a dog at her feet, circa 1785

Circa: circa 1800

Later gilded metal frame with engraved border

Oval, 100mm (4in) high

William Hopkins Craft (1730-1811) was the brother of Thomas Craft, a painter at the Bow porcelain factory. William was partnered with David Rhodes whilst they were both employed by Josiah Wedgwood as enamellers in London. His career as a ceramic painter was short lived, however, as William Craft's chose to work as a painter and miniaturist in enamel. Craft exhibited many enamels at the Royal Academy from 1774-81 and 1794-95, his addresses including 100 St. Martin's Lane, 23 Church Street, Soho, and 1 Bedford Street.

He collaborated with notable contemporary watchmakers and case-makers (such as John Leroux and Francis Perigal) to decorate gold outer watch cases and matching chatelaines, often featuring translucent enamels, classical figures, or delicate portrait miniatures.

The current large plaque, enamelled with a scene from Laurence Sterne's 'A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy', is after a painting by Angelica Kauffmann (the original oil painting at Burghley House PIC234). 'Poor Maria' is a character in a novel entitled 'A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy' written by Lawrence Sterne and first published in 1768.

The novel records that Maria is stricken with grief upon the death of her husband, her sense of loss depicted here by the artist. It was the type of sentimental painting so loved by Kauffmann's supporters.

A number of significant signed works by Craft are recorded, including a pair of plaques dated 1773 depicting George III as Lord of the Sea trampling the allegory of America and Queen Charlotte as Ceres. These are now in the British Museum (1891,0217.17). An Ormolu mantel clock sold at Christies on 7th July 1994, lot 34, was set with a very similar enamel plaque to the present lot. Inscribed 'W.H.Craft Inv't et Fect. 1785', it included an additional putto and doves as well as a scroll detailing the proportion of the National Debt incurred in connection with the American colonies. A clock dated 1779, on which William Craft's enamel plaque symbolises England as a colonising power, is in the Sandoz

collection, now at Château des Monts, Le Locle, Switzerland. For further information on the artist see Leo R Schidlof, *The Miniature in Europe* (1964), vol 1, p 171 and Daphne Foskett, *Dictionary of British Miniature Painters* (1972), vol 1, p 224