THE LIMNER COMPANY

ENGLISH SCHOOL (18th century)

Memorial portrait miniature of a Lady in a turban, holding doves in a basket

Circa: circa 1790

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Watercolour on ivory (licence 87UBYQTH)

Navette shaped, 25 x 7 mm (1 x $^{1}/_{4}$ in); 33 x 20 mm (1 $^{1}/_{4}$ x $^{3}/_{4}$ in) overall brooch size

Original gold locket frame with engraved border and hair reverse, later brooch pin attachment

This locket, presumably commissioned as a memorial piece, combines the symbolism of love and loyalty with the new interest in the Classical world which flourished in the 18th century.

The doves which nestle in the basket of the robed figure in this locket likely represent the undying fidelity and love which extended beyond death. Doves were also a Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit, while Greek depictions show the dove with the goddess of love, Aphrodite, or Venus in Roman mythology. Here, a pair of birds represent union in love, as it was known that doves mated for life.

The 'Capitoline', or 'Pliny's' doves were part of a Roman floor mosaic discovered in 1737 at Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli. Named 'Sous of Pergamon', the scholar Pliny the Elder described Alexander the Great's original version of this image in Natural History, which was completed in 77AD. Swept along by the fever for any links to the Classical world, doves became a popular image in 18th century jewellery.