Object reduced from actual size
JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

**Portrait of Captain James West of the Dutton Indiaman**

1785

Watercolor over traces of black chalk, with metallic gold paint on laid paper; unframed, 19.6 x 15.3 cm (7 ¾ x 6 in.)

Signature: none; inscribed in brown ink beneath border at the bottom: Captain West of the Dutton Indiamen 1785 / drawn on board going to Madras

Setting: unframed

Bequest of Mrs. A. Dean Perry, 1997.79

ALTHOUGH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to say whether or not it was always part of the artist’s process to execute a preparatory sketch prior to painting each miniature, we do know that John Smart retained many hundreds of these sketches. A great number were inherited by his son John James Smart, who in turn left them to his daughter Mary Ann Bose. Upon her death in 1934, they were divided between three of her children: William Henry Bose, Lilian Dyer, and Mabel Annie Busted. It was from these three collections that they were sold at auction through Christie’s, London, in February 1937, November 1937, and December 1936, respectively.¹

Helen Perry (née Greene) left six drawings by John Smart to the Cleveland Museum of Art when she died in 1996. Perry was the granddaughter of one of the museum’s founding members, Jeptha Homer Wade II, and the daughter of Edward B. Greene, who gave his renowned collection of portrait miniatures to the museum primarily during the 1940s. Several CMA curators were asked to

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¹ The catalogues for these three sales are reproduced in Daphne Foskett, *John Smart: The Man and His Miniatures* (London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964), pp. 78–90. It is not known which, if any, drawings were retained by the family members.
visit Perry’s collection in 1988 as she updated her will and wished to know which works might be donated to the museum. After his visit, Michael Miller, assistant curator of prints and drawings, wrote the director Evan Turner that the “miniature portraits by John Smart of General McAllister [sic] and Mary Tadman are quite fine, but our drawings collection has never included material of the sort. I’d leave them to your judgment.” Miller evidently was unaware of the ten Smart sketches that had been left to the museum during the 1940s by Edward Greene. Turner included the sketches of MacAlister and Tadman on the wish list he gave to Perry in 1989, but there is no record as to why the six drawings had not been previously bequeathed to the museum with the Greene collection. Perry did not collect miniatures or small portrait drawings, so it is likely that they were overlooked rather than specially retained for her by her father. Greene’s love of miniatures had previously influenced his daughter’s support for the museum; in 1960 she gave $9,600 for the purchase of a miniature by Nicholas Hilliard in memory of her father. Among the works by Smart in Cleveland’s collection, the group bequeathed by Perry has benefited considerably from recent research that has revealed sitters’ identities and reunited drawings with their miniature counterparts on ivory.

Smart painted Captain West’s head in profile, turned to the right. His powdered hair is worn en queue with curls above his ears and white powder on his shoulders. He has long eyelashes, parted lips, and a grayish cast to his skin tone, particularly over his beard. West dons a blue coat with gold buttonholes embroidered in gold and a white waistcoat, high collar, and cravat tied in a small bow. This work is a finished drawing by Smart, evidenced in part by its larger size and by the fact that the painting of the sitter’s clothing is complete and the bust is placed within an elaborate border comprised of blue, metallic gold, and gray lines. This finished quality does not preclude the possibility that the drawing may also have functioned as a preparatory sketch for a miniature on ivory, which has not been located. A Colnaghi label was removed from the verso after the work entered the museum’s collection.

Captain James West sailed the *Dutton Indiaman* from England to Madras, India, on several occasions, including Smart’s voyage in 1785. Captain James West had the just reputation of being a first-rate mariner, a well-informed, and thoroughly practical man of business, and in every way worthy of confidential intimacy . . . I can also well remember how soon my father contracted a friendship for the captain, and how great a favourite he was with all the officers, sailors, and passengers on board. To what a degree a long sea voyage and close confinement on ship-board are a test of good temper, has passed into a proverb. This mutual good feeling, so accidentally begun, terminated in a friendship for life, between my father and Mr. West. After the sea service, in which he made a handsome fortune, that gentleman was happily prevailed on to become the constant inmate of our family. This continued until the year 1801, when he married.

3 The *Dutton East Indiaman* was a British ship that sailed under charter of the East India Company from 1781 to 1796.
Impey’s account conveys not only West’s personality but the atmosphere that prevailed on the ship over which the captain presided and on which Smart traveled and worked.

As indicated by an inscription in the artist’s hand, this portrait was painted by Smart while he was aboard the *Dutton* en route to Madras and probably retained by the artist as a memento (fig. 1). In addition to the portrait of “Master Impey,” Smart is known to have taken the likeness of other figures while aboard the *Dutton*, including the quartermaster “Baker” and a French ship called the *Consalateur*, which was intercepted by the *Dutton* while sailing to India.⁶ The current location of both works is unknown. Cory Korkow

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⁶ Foskett, *John Smart*, pp. 89, 90.