GEORGE ENGLEHEART (British, 1752–1829)

GEORGE ENGLEHEART WAS BORN in Kew to a German plaster modeler. Among his teachers were George Barret (1728/32–1784) and Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), whose work Engleheart copied in miniature. One of Richard Cosway’s (1742–1821) greatest rivals and stylistically the closest to his work, Engleheart worked primarily in London until retiring in 1813, after which date he painted few miniatures. Engleheart’s miniatures have a more linear, labored manner than those of Cosway, whose painterly works were often left unfinished near the edges. Like Cosway, Engleheart often placed his figures against a background of sky. But the firm draftsmanship (especially in the hair), heavy brows, and the use of grays and blacks for shadows are distinctive to Engleheart, who was celebrated for his ability to capture a sitter’s likeness closely. Engleheart’s productivity is documented by the fee book he kept between 1775 and 1813, which records an astounding total of 4,853 miniatures.¹ He exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1773 and 1812, and was miniature painter to King George III from 1789. There are three fine Engleheart miniatures in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art, all portraits of gentlemen dating near the turn of the century.

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