RICHARD COSWAY WAS ARGUABLY the most fashionable miniature painter in London during the art form’s golden age in late-eighteenth-century Britain. Also an accomplished painter in oils, Cosway was equally well known for his flamboyant character and the stunning art collection that secured his reputation as an arbiter of taste and model of connoisseurship. His elegant portraits in miniature were coveted by sitters who sought glamour even if it was at the expense of truthfulness. Cosway and his wife, Maria (née Hadfield), maintained an elite circle of friends who helped define what was au courant for the age and who consisted primarily of cultural luminaries and young members of high society revolving around George Augustus Frederick, the prince of Wales himself.\(^1\) His steady patronage from 1780 until 1808 fixed Cosway’s popularity within fashionable society. From 1785 Cosway’s miniatures were signed on the back: “Primarius Pictor Serenissimi Walliae Principis” (Principal Painter to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales), a pompous Latin designation that garnered the artist both fame and ridicule. Cosway was a successful artist-celebrity in his own time, and, in spite of being criticized periodically for being too superficially pretty, his miniatures have always been among the most desired by collectors. The Cleveland Museum of Art owns five miniatures by Cosway, painted between 1785 and 1805, that are representative of the artist’s stylistic range during the height of his career. cory korkow

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\(^1\) The salon hosted by the Cosways at Shomberg House in Pall Mall was famous for its sumptuousness, concerts, and illustrious guests. For more information, see Stephen Lloyd, Richard and Maria Cosway: Regency Artists of Taste and Fashion (Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1995).