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HORACE HONE (British, 1756–1825)

**Portrait of Lady Grace Anna Newenham**

1784

Watercolor on ivory; oval, 9 x 7.6 cm (3½ x 3 in.)

Signature: signed at right: HH [in monogram]/1784

Setting: gold *verre églomisé* frame with hair reverse and braided hair “belt” around rim; inscribed on frame: THOUGH LOST TO SIGHT TO MEMORY EVER DEAR. I. W. 28th NOVr 1821.

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1942.1144

LADY GRACE ANNA NEWENHAM (née Burton, 1725–1807) was the wife of Sir Edward Newenham (1734–1814), a prominent radical Protestant Irish politician and MP for Dublin, whom she married in 1754 at St. Thomas in Dublin. Lady Newenham herself came from a highly influential family with deep Whig political roots in Dublin. This miniature was painted in 1784, when she was nearly sixty years old and had been married for thirty years. This period found her husband, Edward, deeply in debt, going to great lengths to secure employment for his children, and planning a trip to America. While the former conditions would not encourage an artistic expenditure, the latter might have provided the impetus for this portrait to be commissioned.

Lady Newenham wears a gray wrap with a high white collar and a white low-neck dress. Her costume is summarily painted with quick...
strokes, and the ivory ground is allowed to show through particularly at her breast, enhancing the delicacy of her complexion. She is not, however, over-flattered as she would have been in the hands of a miniature painter like Richard Cosway (1742–1821). Instead, Horace Hone gently described her sagging jaw line as well as the wrinkles and moles on her face. She has the eyes of an older woman, beneath which Hone’s trademark glowing pink cheeks seem almost to suggest cosmetics. The texture of her lightly powdered brown hair that falls to her shoulders is delineated by Hone’s technique of scraping the surface of the watercolor paint with extremely fine lines that reflect light and suggest individual strands of hair. The background is a muddy gray sky with a hint of pale blue. Hone painted other female portraits in which the sitter wears a large, pearl-ornamented portrait miniature nestled in a big blue bow, much like the one seen here (fig. 1).3

Among the eighteen children that Lady Newenham bore over the course of two decades, six died at a young age.4 This fact made her no stranger to bereavement, a condition revealed in this object in several ways. The case is inscribed in gold verre églomisé (gold engraved on glass): “THOUGH LOST TO SIGHT TO MEMORY EVER DEAR. I. W. 28th NOVr 1821.” The miniature’s frame, therefore, was engraved to commemorate a loss thirty-seven years after the miniature itself was painted by Hone. The significance of the inscription is a mystery, considering that it cannot refer to the sitter herself, who died in 1807. Whether or not any of her children died in November of 1821 is yet unknown. Lady Newenham wears a miniature on her breast, possibly depicting one of the children she lost (fig. 2). The back of the miniature contains plaited hair under glass, bordered with an elaborate woven hair “belt,” a typically Irish form of hairwork. Human hair was frequently incorporated into miniatures and was especially appropriate for mourning miniatures because it transformed the object into a kind of reliquary. Though

3 One such miniature was sold at Christie’s, London, 3 June 2003, lot 173. It is signed and dated 1786.
4 Kelly, Sir Edward Newenham MP, p. 33.
the hair encased in a frame usually belonged to the person depicted, there is no way to be certain in this instance if the hair is that of Lady Newenham, the person whose portrait she wears, or if it was incorporated at a later date when the frame was engraved.

There is a closely related pastel drawing in the private collection of Patricia Rodriguez, a descendant of the sitter (fig. 3). It is identical to the miniature and, like the miniature, has the monogram HH and is dated 1784. It is also signed and dated on the left: “HM 1895”—an inscription that suggests the drawing is a later copy from the miniature but in pastel, a medium in which Hone is not known to have worked. Cory Korkow

Figure 3. Portrait of Lady Grace Anna Newenham, 1784 and 1895. Horace Hone. Pastel on paper; 33.5 x 37 cm (13⅜ x 14⅜ in.). Private collection, Spain.

5 According to Patricia Rodriguez, a label on the back of the chalk drawing reads: “Lady Newenham (née Grace Burton), wife of Sir Edward Newenham, great-grandmother of Thomas Newenham Deane.” The chalk drawing measures 33.5 by 37 centimeters (13¼ by 14½ inches), is signed with the monogram HH, and dated 1784 on the right. It is also signed and dated on the left just above the sitter’s mantle: “HM 1895.”