







NATHANIEL PLIMER (British, 1757–1822)

Portrait of a Man

c. 1795

Watercolor on ivory; oval, 9.2 x 7.7 cm (3⁵/₈ x 3 in.)

Signature: none

Setting: period gold and hair frame

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1941.562.1

Provenance

1930

Leo Schidlof (1886–1966, Paris).

1930

Purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) from Leo Schidlof for £50 (\$250) in summer; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, December 5, 1941.

1941

The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Exhibitions

None.

Bibliography

Chong, Alan, ed. *European and American Painting in The Cleveland Museum of Art*, p. 301. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1993.

Foskett, Daphne. *A Dictionary of British Miniature Painters*, 1: p. 451. London: Faber & Faber, 1972.

Milliken, William M., and Harry B. Wehle. *Portrait Miniatures: The Edward B. Greene Collection*, p. 29, no. 32, pl. XX. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1951.

THE SITTER'S POWDERED hair is tied with a dark bow below the shoulders. He has gray eyes and wears a greenish-gray coat, white shirt, and cravat tied in a bow under his chin. The background is very pale, with ivory ground visible, but faintly light blue close to the head. Among the hallmarks of Nathaniel Plimer's technique was the use of delicate stippling for the shadows of the face and the application of individual dots of paint to create the lower lid eyelashes (fig. 1). This portrait is probably the pendant to 1941.562.2 (fig. 2). The female portrait is slightly larger than the male, and both date from c. 1795, the date at which a British man would have worn his hair powdered and his cravat tied in a bow.¹

It is impossible to know for certain if these unidentified sitters were married, but the fact that they are housed in identical frames, which date from the same period as the paintings, suggests that they are a pair. Although husbands and wives often commissioned portraits in miniature simultaneously, the pairs were frequently divided over

¹ C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964).



time through inheritance, loss, breakage, or independent sale. Both miniatures are housed in identical, wonderfully elaborate period gold frames with braided hairwork. The blue glass back of each has a plait of brown hair in its center. The hair incorporated into the framing of each miniature is approximately the same color, suggesting either that the couple had the same color hair or that the same hair was used in each frame. Traditionally, it was the hair of the sitter that was mounted with his or her miniature portrait. They are both unsigned, as was typical for Plimer's works during this period. CORY KORKOW



Figure 1. Individual dots of paint create the sitter's lower lid eyelashes (detail).



Figure 2. *Portrait of a Woman*, c. 1795. Nathaniel Plimer. Watercolor on ivory; 8.5 x 7 cm (3³/₈ x 2³/₄ in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Edward B. Greene Collection 1941.562.2.