









JOSEPH DANIEL (British, c. 1760–1803)

Portrait of a Man Holding a Glass

c. 1780s

Watercolor on ivory heightened with gum arabic; rectangular, 18.4 x 15.8 cm (7¼ x 6¼ in.)

Signature: none

Setting: original gilt-bronze mat and frame with acorn foliate motif

Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund, 2010.5

Provenance

1972

The Merchiston collection, purchased by Eleanor Hamilton (née Strachan, b. 1933, Scotland) from an unknown source.

2009

Bonhams (Knightsbridge) Merchiston collection sale, November 25 (lot 25).

2009

The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Exhibitions

2002

The Holburne Museum of Art, Bath, *Pickpocketing the Rich: Portrait Painting in Bath 1720–1800*, June 25–September 15.

2005

Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, *Portrait Miniatures from the Merchiston Collection*, September 23–December 11.

Bibliography

Foskett, Daphne. *Miniatures: Dictionary and Guide*, p. 254, pl. 62. Woodbridge, England: Antique Collector's Club, 1987; 2000.

Lloyd, Stephen. *Portrait Miniatures from the Merchiston Collection*, pp. 34–35 and 63, no. 25, ill. on cover and color pl. 10. Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 2005. Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Portrait Miniatures from the Merchiston Collection at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery*.

Sloman, Susan, et al. *Pickpocketing the Rich: Portrait Painting in Bath 1720–1800*, p. 95, no. 67. Bath: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2002. Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Pickpocketing the Rich: Portrait Painting in Bath 1720–1800* at the Holburne Museum of Art, Bath.

JOSEPH DANIEL WAS THE SON of Nochaniah Daniel of Bridgewater, Somerset, and among the first known Jewish artists of South West England.¹ Joseph's work has often been confused with that of his brother Abraham, with whom he competed for patronage. Neither commonly used his forename in signature nor in advertisement, possibly with a view to capitalize on the other's clientele.² Little is known about the brothers' education apart from the fact that they were trained by their mother. Joseph seldom exhibited his miniatures in public: once at the Society of Artists in 1783 (no. 69, "Jew Rabbi"), and at the Royal Academy in 1799. Only in recent years has there been an increased confidence in distinguishing his works from those of Abraham, resulting from the discovery of a handful of miniatures signed with first initials.³ The primary distinction between

1 Bernard Susser, *The Jews of South-West England: The Rise and Decline of Their Medieval and Modern Communities* (Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter Press, 1993), p. 209.

2 Daphne Foskett, *Miniatures: Dictionary and Guide* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1987; 2000), pp. 246–50. A third brother, Phineas, may also have painted miniatures. Susser, *The Jews of South-West England*, p. 209.

3 The most significant of these by Joseph Daniel is a portrait of William Pitt the Younger, c. 1800, in sepia tones, signed "JD." Current location unknown. Foskett, *Miniatures: Dictionary*, 2000, p. 247, pl. 61D (repro.), p. 250.





their styles is usually cited as Joseph's greater attention to detail and his use of gray tones in shading.

While some highly successful artists were able to support themselves by working only in miniature, it was more common for miniature painting to be one of a variety of media in which an artist was proficient, often with some degree of itinerancy. Joseph Daniel exemplifies this type of artist. He worked in Bristol, Bath, and London as a miniature painter, engraver, and jeweler while also executing pictures in oil, crayon, and hairwork. Newspaper advertisements and letters suggest that he was among the most fashionable miniaturists working in Bath during the mid-1780s until his death at the age of forty-three in 1803.⁴

This outstanding miniature dating from the 1780s is unsigned, as was typical of Daniel's practice. The portrait's golden tones and dynamic composition distinguish it from the glamorizing portraits of Richard Cosway (1742–1821) and George Engleheart (1752–1829), and the minutely worked verism of John Smart (1741–1811). The sitter is conventionally dressed, wearing a powdered wig and a cream-colored cravat and waistcoat under a dark brown frock coat against which the delicacy of the translucent frilled cuffs is especially pronounced. There is evidence on the painted surface that Daniel adjusted the position of the index finger on the man's left hand as well as the rightmost curls of his wig. The background is a mottled rusty brown, spot lit to pale brown in the center. The pallor of the sitter's face, framed by gray hair and a blanched background, reinforces the intensity of his dark eyes, which confront the viewer directly. The face is sensitively described with broad gray shadows. The size and format of the work is unusual for the period and presages the scale and style of Victorian miniatures, which belied the aspirations of miniaturists who strove to compete with the oil paintings among which their work

was exhibited. The monumentality of the sitter's gesture is enhanced by Daniel's characteristic use of gum arabic mixed with watercolor that results in a rich tone and texture intended to emulate oil painting. Other works such as his *Portrait of an Unknown Gentleman* in the Holburne Museum of Art demonstrate the artist's fondness for a predominantly brown color palette (fig. 1).⁵



Figure 1. *Unknown Gentleman*, c. 1795–1800. Joseph Daniel. Watercolor on ivory, 6.7 x 5.3 cm (2⁵/₈ x 2 in.). Holburne Museum of Art, Bath, M48.

⁴ *Bath Chronicle*, 11 April 1796, in an article announcing the return to health after illness of "our first artist as a Miniature painter" and Daniel's obituary in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* on 3 September 1803, in which he is described as "long an eminent miniature painter of this city and of Bath."

⁵ Robert Bayne-Powell, *Catalogue of Miniatures in the Holburne Museum and Crafts Study Centre, Bath* (Bath, England: Holburne Museum of Art, 1995), p. 22, color pl. III.



Daniel's attention to detail is evident in the reflection of the window in the curved glass of the goblet (fig. 2). The goblet, while acting as a central element in the picture, is not a refined object; instead, it is a heavy, plain vessel significant for its contents: water from Bath's natural hot springs. This type of virtuoso portrait may have been displayed in the artist's studio to attract clients and refers to the spa culture of Bath, a critical site for social maneuvering in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century England. The *New Bath Guide* for 1786 notes that "[m]any people have come to Bath, tired with taking medicines (at home) to no manner of purpose at all; they have drunk the Bath Water with abundance of delight and pleasure, and by the help of a little physic have recovered to admiration." It is worth noting that "Mr. Daniel" is one of two miniaturists advertised in this guide, reinforcing the close relationship between the waters that drew visitors and the entertainments that occupied their time.⁶ Artists in Bath often arranged their studios as showrooms, and those who could afford it were situated near shops that sold luxury goods.⁷ Because they required fewer sittings than oil portraits and could be completed rapidly, miniatures were popular among tourists.

The guide explains that visitors to Bath were to consume one to three pints of hot water before and after breakfast in the morning.⁸ The water was drunk directly from the pump, in the company of other visitors, and often to the music of a band playing in one of the Pump Rooms. A caricature of the Bath Pump Room by Thomas Rowlandson (1756/57–1827) offers up some idea of the vivacity of this ritual and the variety of characters it attracted (fig. 3).

In this miniature, the solitary nature of the sitter and the ambiguity of the space seem at odds with the expected social context. But the gentleman's outstretched hand and direct eye contact with



Figure 2. Reflection of window in glass goblet (detail).



Figure 3. "The Pump Room," pl. 3 from *Comforts of Bath*, 1798. Thomas Rowlandson (English, 1756/57–1827). Watercolor; dimensions unknown. Victoria Art Gallery, Bath.

⁶ The other miniaturist listed is Lewis Vaslet (English, 1742–1808). *The New Bath Guide* (Bath: W. Taylor, 1786), p. 12.

⁷ Susan Sloman, et al., *Pickpocketing the Rich: Portrait Painting in Bath 1720–1800*, exh. cat., The Holburne Museum of Art, Bath (Bath: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2002), pp. 12, 24, 26, no. 67.

⁸ *New Bath Guide*, p. 13.



the viewer counter this notion, reintroducing the social aspect of drinking. The sitter may have commissioned the miniature to commemorate his return to health, attributed to his taking the waters.

The striking three-dimensional nature of the sitter's gesture is an excellent example of how late-eighteenth-century British portraiture was foundational to the dissolution of the picture plane so evident in Romantic painting.⁹ This work possesses the gestural theatricality of portraits by artists like Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) that exhibit proto-Romantic sensibilities.¹⁰ This portrait's introspectiveness and color palette also allude to the tradition of seventeenth-century Dutch portraiture held in such high esteem by Georgian artists of Daniel's period. High-profile collectors including the future king George IV (1762–1830) actively acquired Dutch Golden Age portraits and genre paintings during the late eighteenth century.¹¹ *The Merry Drinker* by Frans Hals (c. 1581–1666) has a palette, composition, and gesture similar to this miniature, but it underscores an important distinction between types of drinking portraits (fig. 4). While Hals's man has consumed alcohol perhaps to the point of drunkenness, Daniel's sitter soberly draws attention to his glass of salubrious water, the significance of which transcends the fleeting act of toasting or drinking. CORY KORKOW



Figure 4. *The Merry Drinker*, c. 1628–30. Frans Hals (Dutch, c. 1581–1666). Oil on canvas; 81 x 66.5 cm (31⁷/₈ x 26¹/₄ in.). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam SK-A-135.

9 Andrew Wilton, *The Swagger Portrait: Grand Manner Portraiture in Britain from Van Dyck to Augustus John 1630–1930*, exh. cat., Tate Gallery (London: Tate Gallery, 1992), pp. 46–47.

10 Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760–1860* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 17–46.

11 Christopher Wright, *Images of a Golden Age: Dutch Seventeenth-Century Paintings*, exh. cat., Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery (Birmingham, England: Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1989), p. 157. Christopher Lloyd, *Enchanting the Eye: Dutch Paintings of the Golden Age* (London: Royal Collection Enterprises, 2004).