JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

Portrait of a Man, Possibly Sir Soulden Lawrence

1770

Watercolor on ivory; oval, 4.4 x 3.8 cm (1¾ x 1½ in.)

Signature: signed left center: JS / 1770

Setting: amalgam frame; back is engraved with a coat of arms (cross raguly gules) in a cartouche

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1940.1219

Provenance

Before 1939
Friedrich Neuberg (d. 1985, Litomerice, Czechoslovakia [now Czech Republic]).

1939
Purchased by Leo Schidlof (1886–1966, Paris) from Friedrich Neuberg for 7,000 francs on March 27 (Hôtel Drouot, Paris, lot 90).[1]

1939
Purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) from Leo Schidlof for $220; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, December 30, 1940.

1940
The Cleveland Museum of Art.

1 Incorrectly noted in the lot as signed and dated "J. S. 1778" (repr. in the sales catalogue, pl. III).

Exhibitions

1965–66
William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, *John Smart—Miniaturist 1741/42–1811,* December 9–January 2, no. 13 (not repr.).

Bibliography

Chong, Alan, ed. *European and American Painting in The Cleveland Museum of Art,* p. 305. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1993.

Handbook, no. 467 (repr.). Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1958.

———, p. 154. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1966.

Milliken, William M., and Harry B. Wehle. *Portrait Miniatures: The Edward B. Greene Collection,* p. 30, no. 33, pl. VIII. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1951.

THIS PORTRAIT IS AN EXCELLENT example of John Smart's early work. The unknown sitter has blue eyes and wears a light blue coat embroidered in gold, a white waistcoat, and a high white collar with a lace frill down the front. He also dons a powdered wig—still fashionable in 1770. While the sitter's cheeks are flushed with a delicate pink, his complexion does not have the ruddy quality so often seen in Smart's later work. The intricate gold embroidery on the sitter's jacket exemplifies the ornamentation lavished upon menswear during the early and mid-eighteenth century—a male fashion trend replaced two decades later by one that stressed greater sobriety. The date on the miniature is difficult to decipher but probably reads 1770. Not only is the date in keeping with its size, but the number 0 is elevated, as is the case in another Smart miniature in the Cleveland Museum of Art's collection, *Portrait of Constantine Phipps*, also dated 1770. Furthermore, as early as 1948, Smart expert Arthur Jaffé was casting doubt that the portrait could have been painted at any date later than 1773 because of the nature of the costume.[2]

2 According to transcriptions of letters from Arthur Jaffé dated 15 June 1948 and 9 February 1951, as documented in the CMA curatorial file.

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The miniature is housed in a period gold frame with a pin on the back, indicating that it was worn as jewelry. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, miniatures were commonly worn, especially by women, mounted on rings, bracelets, necklaces, or, in this case, a brooch. The back features a coat of arms placed in a cartouche. The formation of the arms is that of a cross raguly gules, or red indented cross.[3] The color red is conveyed in engraving through vertical perpendicular lines. The cartouche is surmounted by what appear to be either four broken columns or a crenellated wall, terminating in a sky or bits of foliage. The cross raguly gules, as seen on the back of the frame, is the basic element of the coat of arms of the Lawrence family in England, though there are numerous modifications and additions among the various branches of the family (fig. 1).[4]

A possible candidate for the identity of this sitter is Sir Soulden Lawrence (1751–1814), who graduated from St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1771, embarked on a legal career, and became justice of the Court of King's Bench in 1794.[5] His book collection was bequeathed to St. John's library, wherein can be seen the bookplate containing his arms (fig. 2).[6] The presence of this coat of arms on Soulden Lawrence's bookplate indicates that he may have been inclined to have the device inscribed on the frame of a portrait miniature as well. A portrait of Lawrence was painted by John Hoppner (1758–1810) around 1804 (fig. 3).[7] Over three decades would have separated the Smart and the Hoppner portraits, which could account for differences in the gentleman's appearance. Although the resemblance between the two portraits is not immediately striking, there are similarities in the softness of the eyes, the delicacy of the skin tone, and the expression of the mouth. CORY KORKOW

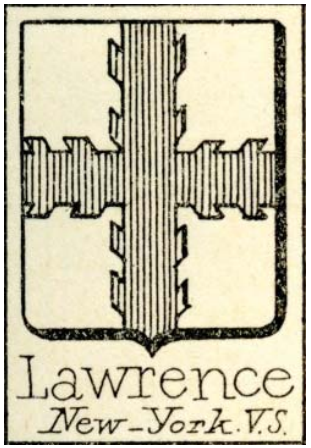

Figure 1. Cross raguly gules, as seen on the Lawrence family coat of arms. From Johannes Baptist Rietstap, *Planches de Armorial Général,* vol. IV (Paris: Institute Héraldique, 1912), pl. XXXV.

Figure 2. Bookplate with arms of Sir Soulden Lawrence above the book label present in many of his books given to St. John's College. Reproduced by permission of the Master and Fellows of St. John's College, Cambridge.

Figure 3. *Portrait of Sir Soulden Lawrence,* c. 1804. John Hoppner (British, 1758–1810). Oil on canvas; 101.6 x 127 cm (40 x 50 in.). Hubbard Court Fine Art, Inc., Stamford, CT.

3 See Charles Norton Elvin, *Dictionary of Heraldry* (London: Heraldry Today, 1969).
4 It has not been possible to determine if Soulden Lawrence had any brothers who might have sat for this work. Although other British coats of arms incorporate the cross raguly, it is most often associated with the Lawrence family, particularly when colored red. See Johannes Baptist Rietstap, *Planches de Armorial Général,* vol. IV (Paris: Institute Héraldique, 1912).
5 Robert Forsyth Scott, ed., *Admissions to the College of St. John the Evangelist in the University of Cambridge,* part III, July 1715–67 (Cambridge: Deighton Bell & Co., 1903), pp. 175, 716.
6 On the bookplate and elsewhere, the name is spelled *Souldern,* rather than *Soulden.*
7 Sold at Sotheby's sale 4 December 1974 and now in the collection of Hubbard Court Fine Art, Inc., Stamford, Connecticut: http://www.trocadero.com/hubbardcourt/items/567973/item567973store.html#item (accessed 24 June 2010).