







JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

Portrait of a Man

1789

Watercolor on ivory; oval, 7.1 x 5.5 cm (2¾ x 2⅛ in.)

Signature: signed left: JS / 1789 / I

Setting: original gold frame set with real half pearls; solid metal back

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1943.651

Provenance

Before 1924

Robert Wortmann (Vienna).

1929

Leo Schidlof (1886–1966, Paris).

1929

Purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) from Leo Schidlof for £170 (\$850) on January 4; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, December 29, 1943.

1943

The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Exhibitions

1924

Albertina, Vienna, *International Exhibition of Miniatures*, no. 833.

1965–66

William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, *John Smart—Miniaturist 1741/42–1811*, December 9–January 2, no. 26 (not repr.).

Bibliography

Chong, Alan, ed. *European and American Painting in The Cleveland Museum of Art*, p. 304. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1993.

Comstack, Helen. "The Edward B. Greene Collection of Miniatures." *Connoisseur* 128 (October 1951): p. 130.

Milliken, William M., and Harry B. Wehle. *Portrait Miniatures: The Edward B. Greene Collection*, p. 30, no. 35, pl. X. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1951.

THIS UNKNOWN SITTER has remarkably light blue eyes, a ruddy complexion, and powdered hair worn *en queue*. He wears a brown coat with a white cravat and waistcoat. The background is muddy brown. The miniature is housed in its original gold frame, which is set with genuine half pearls. This man was painted in 1789 when John Smart was working in Madras, India. He is probably a Madras civil servant or merchant.

This work is typical of Smart's portraits of non-military gentlemen living in India. Two other miniatures also painted by Smart in India in 1789 show striking similarities: *Portrait of the Hon. Basil Cochrane* and *Portrait of Benjamin Torin* (figs. 1, 2).¹ Like the CMA sitter, both of these gentlemen are dressed in dark coats with brass buttons, nearly identical cravats, and waistcoats. They wear their hair *en queue*, and a dusting of powder is visible on their wide coat collars. In each portrait the sheen of the skin, particularly on the

¹ Benjamin Torin was an East India Company paymaster and businessman in Madras. See *Important Gold Boxes, Objects of Vertu & Portrait Miniatures* (London: Christie's, 10 December 2002), lot 142. For Cochrane, see *Important Miniatures from a Private Collection* (London: Sotheby's, 16 April 2008), lot 52.



Figure 1. *Portrait of the Hon. Basil Cochrane (1753–1826), 1789. John Smart. Watercolor on ivory; 5.9 x 4.5 cm (2³/₈ x 1³/₄ in.). From *Important Miniatures from a Private Collection* (London: Sotheby's, 16 April 2008), lot 52. Reproduced courtesy of Sotheby's.*



Figure 2. *Portrait of Benjamin Torin (1768–1839), 1789. John Smart. Watercolor on ivory; h. 5.8 cm (2¹/₄ in.). From *Important Gold Boxes, Objects of Vertu & Portrait Miniatures* (London: Christie's, 10 December 2002), lot 142.*

nose, cheeks, and temples, suggests perspiration, a quality thrown into greater relief by the dull brown backgrounds. Although all three men wear a pleasant facial expression and are styled nearly identically, their facial features are highly distinctive and bear testimony to Smart's capacity to capture a sitter's likeness even when his production was in many ways systematized. CORY KORKOW