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JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

Portrait of Constantine Phipps

1770

Watercolor on ivory; oval, 4.6 x 4.1 cm (134 x 15% in.)

Signature: signed lower left: J. S. / 1770.

Setting: gold and woven hair bracelet, c. 1830s; inscription on case: Constantine Phipps / 1770; inscription on clasp: E. C. E. T. / Nov.r 29th 1838, aged 7.

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1951.437

Provenance

1770-1838

Commissioned from the artist by Constantine Phipps; by inheritance within the Phipps family.

1838

By inheritance to Elizabeth Clarissa Emilie Toker, great-granddaughter of Constantine Phipps.

Before 1951

Private dealer; purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) from an unknown source for \$650; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art. 1951.

1951

The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Exhibitions

None.

Bibliography

Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art XLI (February 1954): pp. 25-26, p. 22 (repr.).

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

Foskett, Daphne. *John Smart*, p. 72. London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964.

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. JOHN SMART PAINTED the British gentleman Constantine Phipps (1746–1797) at the age of twenty-four, executing this portrait in 1770, the year following the death of the sitter's father, Constantine Phipps (1710?–1769), and preceding his marriage to Elizabeth Tierney (d. 1832). Phipps the younger was the second son of a landowner and lived throughout England and France. In 1788 he moved his family to Caen, Normandy, hoping to educate his ten (eventually thirteen) children more economically. Phipps and his wife returned to England in 1792 to attend their daughter's wedding. The escalating conflict between France and England prevented Phipps from returning to France where he had left eight children behind. Unfortunately, he did not see them before his death five years later.

The portrait represents Phipps's nearly full face. He has light brown eyes and natural brown hair worn *en queue*. He wears a green coat with a small collar, a white waistcoat embroidered with gold, and a high, white stock collar. Phipps is depicted against an olive-gray background. This early work by Smart already exhibits hallmarks of the artist's style, such as the plain, gray background, the sitter's colorful clothing, and his expressive eyes and slightly upturned





mouth, which suggest that Phipps was a self-assured man with a sense of humor. The small format is also characteristic of the first decade of Smart's career.

This miniature is mounted in an elaborately carved gold frame on a bracelet made of gold and woven light brown human hair (fig. 1). The bracelet was executed later than the miniature and is in the style of the 1830s or 1840s. The inscription on the clasp reads "E. C. E. T. / Nov.r 29th 1838, aged 7" and may indicate that this bracelet was given to Constantine's great-granddaughter Elizabeth Clarissa Emilie Toker (1831–1888) on her seventh birthday possibly by her mother or grandmother.

There is a variant of this work in the Phipps collection in London. Painted in 1771, this miniature descended from Colonel Pownoll Phipps, the seventh child of Constantine Phipps, to John Constantine Phipps. ² CORY KORKOW



Figure 1. Hairwork on the miniature (detail).

¹ The setting on this bracelet is similar to a work in the Victoria and Albert Museum that dates to around 1840. See Shirley Bury, *Jewellery* 1789–1910: *The International Era*, vol. II, 1862–1910 (Woodbridge, England: Antique Collectors Club, 1991), pp. 682–83, pl. 190 B.

² As documented in the CMA curatorial file, a letter dated 28 July 1952 from John Constantine Phipps in London to the CMA curator Louise Burchfield cites biographical information and the existence of a variant of this miniature. See also Daphne Foskett, *John Smart* (London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964), p. 72.