JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

Portrait of a Man

1786

Watercolor on ivory; oval, 5.5 x 4.2 cm (2⅛ x 1⅝ in.)

Signature: signed lower left: JS / 1786 / I

Setting: gold frame

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1949.546

Provenance

Before 1949
H. Davis (H. E. Backer, dealer [London]).

19??
Purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) for $423, less 15%; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, December 23, 1949.

1949
The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Exhibitions

1965–66
William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, *John Smart—Miniaturist 1741/42–1811,* December 9–January 2, no. 21 (not repr.).

Bibliography

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

Milliken, William M., and Harry B. Wehle. *Portrait Miniatures: The Edward B. Greene Collection,* p. 30, no. 34, pl. IX. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1951.

JOHN SMART PAINTED this miniature in India, where he was based in Madras. The unidentified sitter has gray-brown eyes and powdered hair worn *en queue.* Smart painted the hair with a combination of loose brushstrokes, over which fine white lines are applied to suggest individual hairs and create movement that is carried through the stippling of the face. The manner in which he mixed his colors sometimes resulted in an alteration of the pigment, causing a sitter's hair to appear pinkish, as can be seen here. A dusting of powder is visible on the sitter's shoulder. He wears a blue coat featuring a red collar and a high white stock collar with a bow and ruffled jabot, the general effect of which is sometimes taken to suggest a military uniform. However, similar blue and red coats can be seen in portraits of American, British, and French gentlemen, including those of independent means, so this style of dress seems not to have been associated with any particular military or civilian uniform (fig. 1). The sitter's face is sensitively described with Smart's trademark stippling.

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

© 2012 The Cleveland Museum of Art

Highlights over the brow, upper lip, around the eyes, and at the tip of the nose are created less with the addition of white than through the absence of darker stippled pigment. The overall result is a degree of warmth and depth not often found among the portraits of Smart's contemporaries. The miniature is housed in a simple gold frame.

CORY KORKOW

Figure 1. *Portrait of William Locke (1767–1847),* c. 1784. John Hoppner (British, 1758–1810). Oil on canvas; 73.5 x 61 cm (29 x 24 in.). From *Important British Paintings* (London: Sotheby's, 6 June 2007), lot 38. Reproduced courtesy of Sotheby's.