







JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

Self-Portrait

1802

Watercolor on ivory; oval, 7 x 5.7 cm (2¾ x 2¼ in.)

Signature: signed lower left: JS / 1802

Setting: original, silver-gilt case

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1952.95

Provenance

1802

Collection of the artist.

1811

By inheritance from the artist to his son, John James Smart (1805–1870).

1870

By inheritance from John James Smart to his daughter Mary Ann Bose (née Smart, 1856–1934).

1934

By inheritance from Mary Ann Bose to her son, William H. Bose (1875–1957).

1945

Christie's (London) Bose sale, December 17 (lot 18), for 310 guineas.¹

1945

Robert H. Rockliff (d. 1963).

1947

Sotheby's (London) Rockliff sale, November 11 (lot 119, pl. VI), for £360.

1948

Purchased by H. E. Backer, dealer (London), on commission.

1948

Dr. C. H. Samuelson (Greenacre, Exeter, England).

By 1952

Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland); gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1952.

1952

The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Exhibitions

None.

Bibliography

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Foskett, Daphne. *A Dictionary of British Miniature Painters*, vol. 1, pp. 513–16; vol. II, no. 840, pl. 336. London: Praeger Publishers, 1972.

———. *John Smart*, fig. 6 (repr.), pl. III. London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964.

Jaffé, Arthur. "John Smart, Miniature Painter—1741(?)–1811: His Life and Iconography." *Art Quarterly* XVII, no. 3 (Autumn 1954): fig. 10, pp. 249 (repr.), 251, 254.

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.

¹ As documented in the CMA curatorial file, a letter dated 1951 from Arthur Jaffé notes the selling price of 310 guineas to Rockliff.



THIS SELF-PORTRAIT depicts the artist's almost full face with blue-gray eyes; gray, curly hair and sideburns; and a ruddy complexion. In spite of the fact that it was no longer in fashion, the powder on his collar indicates that even in 1802 John Smart continued to powder his hair. He wears a dark blue coat with brass buttons; white stock collar, bow, and frill; and deep yellow waistcoat. Arthur Jaffé has argued that the yellow waistcoat also seen in Smart's portrait in the National Gallery, London, indicates his Whiggish political proclivities.² The background of the miniature is yellowish gray, and it is signed at the lower left: "JS / 1802." The silver-gilt frame is probably original, but the gold monogram JS, placed over an opalescent background, may have been added later.

The portrait was formerly in the collection of William Henry Bose, who was Smart's great-grandson. The Bose collection of Smart sketches and preparatory studies was sold 15 February 1937 at Christie's, London, but the self-portrait was retained and lent to the Victoria and Albert Museum. In her biography of Smart, Daphne Foskett notes that in 1913 William Bose received a letter from the Reynolds Galleries in London informing him that "Smart's miniatures were not then selling quite as well as they formerly did, and that the average price of a male portrait was from £20 to £30 and for a lady, young and good-looking, from £30 to £70."³ In 1947, over three decades later, the market had revived, and the self-portrait sold for £360.

In her *Dictionary of British Miniature Painters*, Foskett notes that Smart painted nine self-portraits, but she does not list them.⁴ Having executed at least nine self-portraits during two decades of his mature career, Smart seemed more invested in recording his changing

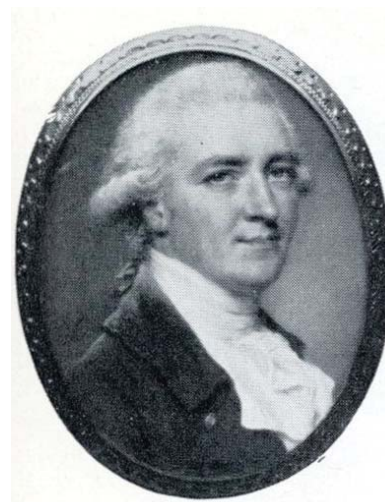


Figure 1. *Self-Portrait*, 1783. John Smart. Watercolor on ivory; 3.8 x 2.9 cm (1½ x 1⅛ in.). Collection of Mrs. H. Kahn, 1964.



Figure 2. *Self-Portrait*, c. 1780-85. John Smart. Pencil; 7 x 6 cm (2¾ x 2½ in.). Collection of Michael Jaffé, 1964.

likeness than most of his miniature-painting contemporaries. This attitude of consistent introspection and careful attention to the conservation of his skills outside of the pressures of a commission is in keeping with his practice of executing and retaining highly finished preliminary studies of his sitters for their portraits.

In each of his self-portraits, Smart is conservatively dressed and coiffed, with the ruddy complexion and slightly amused expression found in so many of the portraits he painted. An earlier self-portrait in watercolor on ivory is signed and dated 1783 (fig. 1);⁵ in 1964 this work was in the collection of Mrs. H. Kahn. A second earlier version in pencil, dating to around 1780-85, was in the collection of Michael Jaffé in 1964 (fig. 2).⁶ Another earlier portrait in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is executed in watercolor on ivory and dated 1786 (fig. 3). A fourth version dated 1797 is in the Victoria and Albert Museum and

2 Arthur Jaffé, "John Smart, Miniature Painter-1741(?)-1811: His Life and Iconography," *Art Quarterly* XVII, no. 3 (Autumn 1954): pp. 251, 254.

3 Daphne Foskett, *John Smart* (London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964), p. 35. Information obtained by Foskett from the papers of Arthur Jaffé.

4 Daphne Foskett, *A Dictionary of British Miniature Painters* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1972), vol. 1, p. 516; vol. II, no. 840, pl. 336. Only the Cleveland self-portrait is reproduced.

5 Repr. Foskett, *John Smart*, pl. III, no. 4.

6 *Ibid.*, pl. III, no. 5.



Figure 3. *Self-Portrait*, 1786. John Smart. Watercolor on ivory; 11 x 9.5 cm (4 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Otis Norcross Fund 54.935.



Figure 4. *Self-Portrait*, 1797. John Smart. Watercolor on ivory; 8.6 x 7 cm (3 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.). Victoria and Albert Museum, Purchased with funds from the Captain H. B. Murray Bequest P11-1940. © V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 5. *Portrait of John Smart*, c. 1780. Richard Brompton (English, c. 1734–1783). Pencil; dimensions unknown. Formerly Starr Collection, 1964.

was probably the self-portrait exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1798 (fig. 4).⁷ In both the CMA and the V&A self-portraits, the directness of Smart's gaze is arresting, though not surprising for an artist who by all accounts was extraordinarily confident and ambitious. A fifth self-portrait in pencil, listed as lot 64 in the catalogue for the 1937 Dyer sale at Christie's, London, was described as "nearly in profile to the right, in grey-green coat, white vest and white cravat, his hair powdered—signed with initials, and dated 1797—in oval gold frame, the reverse with his monogram and a lock of hair."⁸ A sixth version dated 1803 was referred to by Arthur Jaffé as being in his collection in 1951. Its present whereabouts are unknown. A letter from Jaffé in 1951 states, "The [CMA] Smart Self Portrait of 1802 corresponds to mine of 1803 which I showed you when you were here. Except

that it shows more coat and is therefore larger."⁹ A seventh version, which seems to have been undated, was listed among the works in *An Exhibition of English Miniatures by Celebrated Masters* in London in 1905. It is described as a portrait of Smart, "painted by himself. With powdered hair, wearing a white coat and ruffles. Mounted in oval diamond frame. Signed."¹⁰

Portraits of Smart by other artists reiterate both the humor and intensity seen in the self-portraits. These include a painting by Richard Brompton (c. 1734–1783) dated 1780 and portraying the artist in the act of painting a miniature (fig. 5); a portrait now attributed

7 Katherine Coombs, *The Portrait Miniature in England* (London: V&A Publications, 1998), p. 92.
8 Foskett, *John Smart*, p. 90.

9 According to a transcription of a letter dated 5 December 1951 from Arthur Jaffé, as documented in the CMA curatorial file.

10 *An Exhibition of English Miniatures by Celebrated Masters of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, exh. cat., E. M. Hodgkins Gallery, New Bond Street (London: Chiswick Press, 1905), p. 42, no. 91.



to Mather Brown (1761–1831) from around 1784 in the Joslyn Art Museum (fig. 6); and a portrait by an unknown artist dating from about 1795–1800 in the National Portrait Gallery, London (fig. 7).¹¹ The Mather Brown portrait was also in the collection of William Bose. CORY KORKOW

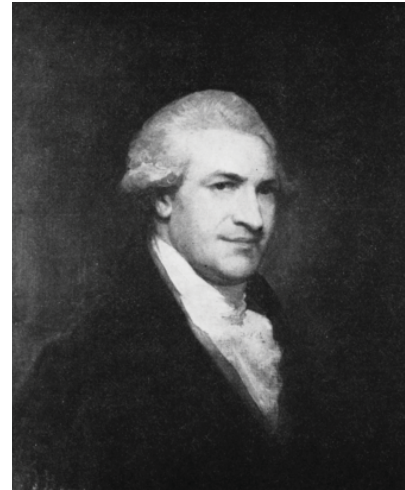


Figure 6. *Portrait of John Smart*, c. 1784. Attributed to Mather Brown (American, 1761–1831). Oil on canvas; 61 x 50.8 cm (24 x 20 in.). Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska: Museum Purchase, JAM 1937.34.

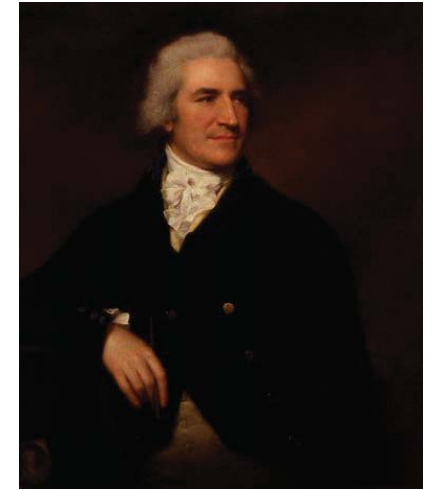


Figure 7. *Portrait of John Smart*, c. 1795–1800. Unknown artist. Oil on canvas; 89.2 x 68.9 cm (35½ x 27¼ in.). National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 3817.

¹¹ Foskett, *John Smart*, pls. I and II. Foskett identifies the Mather Brown as Gilbert Stuart, and the unknown artist as Lemuel F. Abbot.