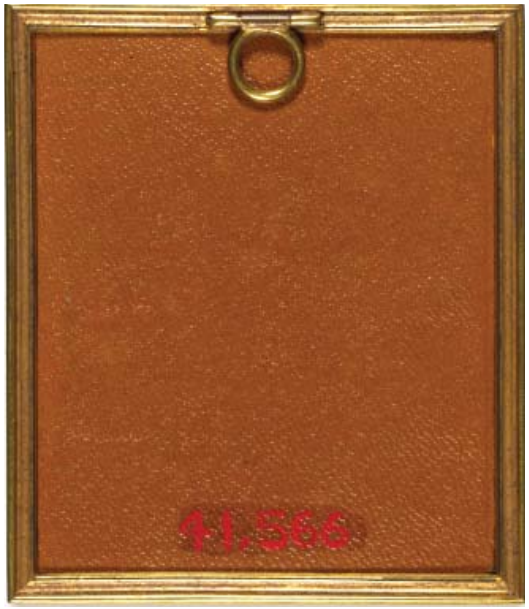
41.566

JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

# *Portrait of Mr. Gambier*

c. 1776

Graphite and wash on laid paper; rectangular, 7.9 x 6.9 cm (3 x 2¾ in.)

Signature: none; inscribed on front of paper in graphite at upper right corner: [?][?]2; inscribed on paper backing in graphite upside down at upper left: 15; in graphite on a slant from left center to upper right: Mr. Fitzherbert; inscribed on back of paper in graphite: Mr. [Gambier]; inscribed in brown ink: Gambier

Setting: 1929 square metal frame with narrow border of white enamel around outer edge

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1941.566

**Provenance**

Until 1811
John Smart (1741–1811); by inheritance to Sarah Smart (1781–1853), daughter of the artist by Sarah Midgeley.[1]

1811–c. 1853
Sarah Smart.

c. 1853
Gift to Mary Smirke (d. 1853, Slough); by inheritance to her brother, Sydney Smirke (1798–1877).

1853–77
Sydney Smirke; by inheritance to his daughter Mrs. Lange (née Smirke, d. 1928).

1877–1928
Mrs. Lange; by inheritance to her brother, Sir Edward Smirke.

1928
Sir Edward Smirke.

1928
Purchased by Leo Schidlof (1886–1966, Paris) at Christie's (London) sale, December 10 (lot 8).[2]

1929
Purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) from Leo Schidlof for £50 ($250.00) around July; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, December 5, 1941.

1941
The Cleveland Museum of Art.

1 Following his first marriage, John Smart had two children out of wedlock with Sarah Midgeley: John (1776–1809) and Sarah (1781–1853).

2 Called "Mr. Gambier" and mounted with a portrait of "Mr. Aurial."

**Exhibitions**

1904
Moncorvo House, London, *Royal Amateur Art Society Exhibition of Miniatures,* March 5–8 (possibly).

**Bibliography**


Foskett, Daphne. *John Smart: The Man and His Miniatures,* p. 67. London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964.

Milliken, William M., and Harry B. Wehle. *Portrait Miniatures: The Edward B. Greene Collection,* p. 31, no. 39, pl. XV (repr.). Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1951.

Williamson, George Charles. *The Miniature Collector,* p. 146. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1921.


THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

ALTHOUGH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to say whether or not it was always part of the artist's process to execute a preparatory sketch prior to painting each miniature, we do know that John Smart retained many hundreds of these sketches. A group of preparatory sketches—of which this portrait is one—descended through the Smirke family after Smart's daughter Sarah gave a sketchbook containing preparatory portrait studies to her friend Mary Smirke, sister of the celebrated Victorian architect Sydney Smirke. This book was probably broken up around 1877 when its contents was divided between Sydney's daughters Mary Jemmett and Mrs. Lange, whose portions were both sold at auction in 1928.

G. C. Williamson was the first to suggest that Smart's sketches were well known and that they were preparatory studies for the painted miniatures.[3] Williamson listed the names of sitters from the sketches known to him at the time, and they include Mr. Fitzherbert, the identification formerly given to the sitter in this portrait. Here, the sitter's head and shoulders are facing left. He has brown eyes and wears his powdered hair *en queue.* His coat has a narrow collar, under which he wears a high stock collar and frilled vest. The color of his attire is not suggested, and the background remains unpainted.

Though long catalogued as Mr. Fitzherbert, the portrait was likely mistakenly designated as such at a later date (fig. 1). There has been confusion regarding several miniatures called Mr. Fitzherbert, which may or may not be related. There was a sketch of a different Mr. Fitzherbert in the Jemmett sale of 29 February 1928; another in the Burton-Jones collection by the 1940s; and a miniature of a Mr. Fitzherbert portrayed nearly full face and dated 1771 was sold at Sotheby's, London, on 1 August 1934 (lot 73). The present location of these unpublished miniatures is unknown, as is their credibility as portraits of the Mr. Fitzherbert that Smart is known to have painted.

When the paper backing of the Cleveland miniature was removed in 1993, the name Gambier was discovered inscribed in graphite and

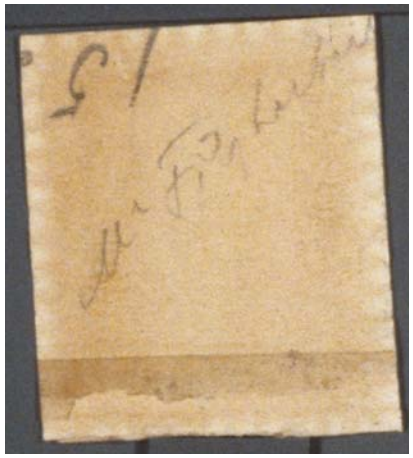

Figure 1. Conservation photograph showing the verso of the drawing before the backing was removed.

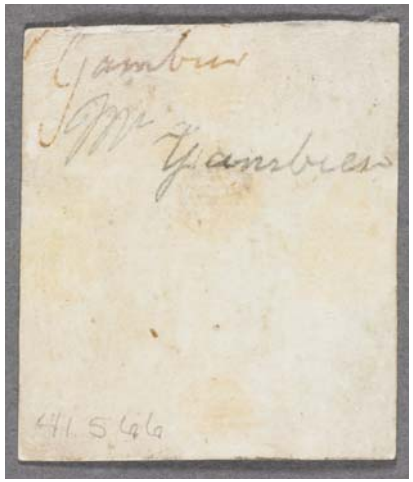

Figure 2. Verso of drawing showing inscription.

3 George Charles Williamson, *The Miniature Collector* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1921), p. 146.

pen on the back (fig. 2). This miniature relates to a portrait on ivory of a man dated 1774, formerly in the Ashcroft collection and at one time on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum (fig. 3).[4] It was sold at Sotheby's, London, on 7 May 1946 (lot 61) and catalogued as a "miniature of a young man, by John Smart, signed and dated, head and shoulders three-quarters sinister, gaze directed at spectator, fair hair *en queue*, in white cravat, frilled vest and rich red coat, 1⅜ in." The size of the portraits correspond, though the ivory miniature represents less of the figure than is seen in the sketch and is therefore smaller. While the color red for the coat is not indicated in the sketch, Smart often left the dress of his male sitters plain in preparatory sketches. Thus, this currently unlocated miniature on ivory can be identified as Mr. Gambier. Research into the identity of this gentleman is ongoing. CORY KORKOW

Figure 3. *Portrait of a Young Man.* John Smart. Watercolor on ivory; h. 3.5 cm (1⅜ in.). From auction catalogue (London: Sotheby's, 7 May 1946), pl. VIII, lot 61. Current location unknown. Reproduced courtesy of Sotheby's.

4 Victoria and Albert photo no. 68031. The present location of this miniature is unknown.