





JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

*Portrait of Sukey, Lady Oglander, née Serle*

c. 1770s

Graphite and wash on laid paper; rectangular, 7.7 x 6.5 cm (3 x 2½ in.)

Signature: none; inscribed on front of paper in graphite at upper right: 135; inscribed on paper backing in graphite on slant at lower left corner: Duchess of Bourbon; inscribed twice on back of paper beneath paper backing in graphite: Lady Oglander

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

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1941.567

**Provenance**

Until 1811

John Smart (1741–1811); by inheritance to Sarah Smart (1781–1853), daughter of the artist by Sarah Midgeley.<sup>1</sup>

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 9).<sup>2</sup>

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.

**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. 71. London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964.

Milliken, William M., and Harry B. Wehle. *Portrait Miniatures: The Edward B. Greene Collection*, p. 31, no. 44, pl. XI (repr.). Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1951.

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Called "Duchess of Bourbon" and framed with five other miniatures including "Eleanara"; "Anne of Denmark"; "Miss Bennet"; "La Belle Gabrielle"; and "Elizabeth Palkin."



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.<sup>3</sup> Williamson listed the names of sitters from the sketches known to him at the time, and they include Lady Oglander. This portrait was assigned the historically colorful but fictitious title of "Duchess of Bourbon" at some point after memory of its true identity had been lost (fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> Giving illustrious titles to portraits of unknown sitters was a popular strategy adopted by dealers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, often applied to miniature portraits and, in particular, to Smart's sketches of women. However, when the paper backing was removed from this miniature, the name Lady Oglander was discovered written twice in graphite on the back (fig. 2). The lower inscription seems to have been reinforced or written later and is probably not in the artist's hand.

Compared to his contemporaries George Engleheart (1752–1829) and Andrew Plimer (1763–1837), whose female sitters were often painted in similar simple white gowns, Smart often lavished more attention on the costumes in his portraits of women, whose dresses incorporated colored silks, printed fabrics, and luxury trimmings like lace and fur, as seen here. The sitter's head and shoulders face right,



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

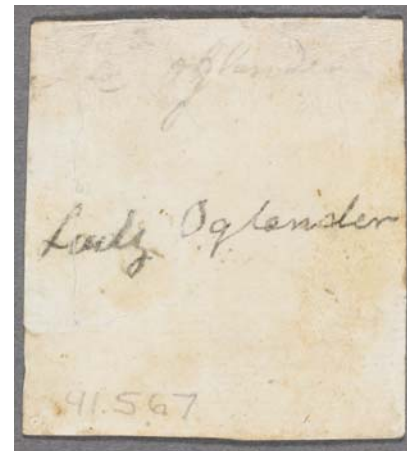


Figure 2. Verso of drawing showing inscription.

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

<sup>4</sup> The date at which this new title was adopted is unknown, but it had been applied by 1928 when it was so catalogued in the Christie's sale.



and her light hair is dressed high, with flat curls at the back of her head. She has gray eyes and wears a lavender surcoat trimmed with ermine, over a turquoise blue, low-necked dress and white underslip bordered with lace; the ermine trim confirms that the sitter was a titled lady. Smart placed her inside a faintly suggested oval, and the background is unpainted.

Sukey, Lady Oglander (née Serle, d. 1805), married Sir William Oglander, 5th Baronet of Nunwell (1733–1806), in 1765. She was the only daughter of Peter Serle of Testwood, Hants, and delighted the Oglander family by bringing £10,000 to the marriage. Sukey had eleven children with William, eight of whom survived childhood.<sup>5</sup> The Oglanders were a prominent and well-loved family on the Isle of Wight, their presence on the island first dating from the time of William the Conqueror and lasting until the title expired in 1874 when the last Oglander Baronet of Nunwell died.

This preparatory sketch somewhat resembles a miniature on ivory of the same size that sold at Christie's, London, in 2000 (fig. 3).<sup>6</sup> The sitter's name is unknown, but she wears a nearly identical green wrap gown and underslip and a lavender surcoat, though it is trimmed with brown fur rather than ermine. Her coiffure is similar to that in the preparatory sketch as well, though in the ivory her hair is ornamented with pearls. The facial features, however, differ, with the sketch representing an older woman having somewhat coarser features. While the portrait may have been idealized in the finished ivory version, it is also possible that the sketch was employed primarily for the costume and depicts another sitter entirely.

Daphne Foskett lists among Smart's work portraits of a Dr. John Oglander and a Lady and Miss Oglander.<sup>7</sup> A preparatory sketch by Smart of a Mr. Oglander sold at Christie's, London, on 10 June 2010



Figure 3. *Portrait of a Lady*, 1771. John Smart. Watercolor on card; h. 4.3 cm (1¾ in.). From *Important Portrait Miniatures, Gold Boxes and Objects of Vertu* (London: Christie's, 21 November 2000), lot 103. Current location unknown.



Figure 4. *Portrait of a Man Called Mr. Oglander*. John Smart. Graphite and watercolor on card; 5.1 x 3 cm (2 x 1¼ in.). From *Centuries of Style: Silver, European Ceramics, Portrait Miniatures and Gold Boxes* (London: Christie's, 10 June 2010), lot 161. Current location unknown.

5 Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, *Nunwell Symphony*, 2nd impression (London: Hogarth Press, 1945), pp. 163–70.

6 *Important Portrait Miniatures, Gold Boxes and Objects of Vertu* (London: Christie's, 21 November 2000), p. 48, lot 103 (obverse). Sold for £13,000.

7 Daphne Foskett, *John Smart: The Man and His Miniatures* (London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964), p. 71.



(fig. 4).<sup>8</sup> Another preparatory sketch titled *Portrait of John Oglander, Warden of New College, Oxford*, was sold at Bonhams, London, on 30 October 2001 (fig. 5).<sup>9</sup> These sketches are approximately the same size as Cleveland's Lady Oglander and may have been commissions related by date or patron. The sale of Smart drawings inherited by W. H. Bose and sold at Christie's, London, in 1937 included a "Head of Miss Oglander," "sister to Sir John Oglander of the Isle of Wight," but this lot was not illustrated, and its relationship to the sketch discussed here is unknown. John Oglander, Warden of New College, Oxford, was the brother-in-law of Sukey, Lady Oglander, and Miss Oglander was probably her sister-in-law Susannah Oglander (d. 1816). CORY KORKOW



Figure 5. *Portrait of John Oglander, Warden of New College, Oxford*. John Smart. Watercolor on card; h. 5.3 cm (2 in.). From *Fine Portrait Miniatures and Silhouettes* (Knightsbridge, London: Bonhams, 30 October 2001), lot 360. Current location unknown.

<sup>8</sup> See *Centuries of Style: Silver, European Ceramics, Portrait Miniatures and Gold Boxes* (London: Christie's, 10 June 2010), lot 161. Sold for £11,250.

<sup>9</sup> See *Fine Portrait Miniatures and Silhouettes* (Knightsbridge, London: Bonhams, 30 October 2001), lot 360. Sold for £2,400.