







JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

Portrait of Mrs. Nathaniel Bailey, née Lamack

c. 1776

Graphite and wash on laid paper; oval, 6.2 x 5.3 cm (2½ x 2 in.)

Signature: none

Setting: modern gold frame

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1942.1155

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 Mary O. Jemmett (née Smirke).

1877–1928

Mary O. Jemmett.

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



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1928

Purchased by Leopold C. Davis (London) for £42 at Christie's (London) sale, February 29 (lot 61).

1930

Purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) from Leopold C. Davis for £52.10 in August; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1942.

1942

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. 62. London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964.

Milliken, William M., and Harry B. Wehle. *Portrait Miniatures: The Edward B. Greene Collection*, p. 32, no. 47, pl. XV. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1951.

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.

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 in this portrait. Mrs. Bailey wears a violet surcoat trimmed with fur, worn over a cream-colored gown trimmed with a



border of alternating pearls and blue stones and two vertical rows of pearls with one large pearl between them. Her brown hair is dressed high with ringlets descending down her neck and over her shoulders. The coiffure is ornamented with a strand of pearls and two ostrich plumes. The case is modern, and there is a brownish cast to what was originally pale, cream-colored paper—the result of light exposure changing the color over time. Smart’s preparatory sketches were compiled in books but once removed were often grouped in frames or placed in locket such as this one.

This portrait was part of the Smirke collection owned by Mary Jemmett, who sold it at Christie’s, London, on 29 February 1928.² Lot 61 for this sale is described as “Mrs. Bailey, wearing pale mauve and white dress, her hair dressed high and trimmed with feathers.” The sitter, Mrs. Nathaniel Bailey (née Lamack), of Clapham, married the member of Parliament for Abingdon on 18 March 1773.³ Her husband was of sufficient means and is recorded in 1775 as having performed his annual distribution of £100 of bread and meat to the poor of his borough.⁴ Little else is known about this sitter.

This drawing was a preparatory study for a portrait on ivory, signed and dated 1776, and measuring 2 inches high (fig. 1). The ivory miniature was formerly in the Ashcroft collection and was sold at Sotheby’s, London, in May 1946 to Arthur Jaffé, having previously been on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1924 to 1939.⁵ In this sale the miniature is described as “An Attractive Miniature of a Lady, by John Smart, signed and dated 1776, head and gaze three-quarters dexter, a white feather and pearls in her high piled chestnut hair, ringlets falling to the shoulders, wearing a pearl and emerald



Figure 1. *Portrait of a Lady*, 1776. John Smart. Watercolor on ivory; h. 4.8 cm (1⁷/₈ in.). Current location unknown.

bordered low-cut cream dress and fur trimmed lavender jacket.”⁶ It most recently sold at Christie’s, London, in 2003.⁷ This portrait miniature is identical to the preparatory sketch here, both of which describe the sitter as wearing a faintly violet costume, though this color is no longer discernible in the sketch. The current location of the miniature on ivory is unknown.

Edward Greene donated this and nine other preparatory studies by Smart to the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1941 and 1942. This sketch was acquired by Greene from Leopold Davis for around \$260 in 1930. Although this portrait was probably part of the same sketchbook as the other nine purchased by Greene, Davis did not indicate whether or not this was indeed the case. The majority of these sketches were in a compromised condition, with fading and foxing especially prevalent. CORY KORKOW

² See transcriptions of correspondence from Arthur Jaffé dated 30 April 1948; 24 January 1950; and February 1951, as documented in curatorial file.

³ *The Town and Country Magazine* 5 (April 1773): p. 167.

⁴ James Townsend, ed., *News of a country town: being extracts from “Jackson’s Oxford journal” relating to Abingdon 1753–1835* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 81.

⁵ Collection of F. A. Ashcroft and Mrs. O. S. Ashcroft. *Catalogue of Fine Portrait Miniatures, Gold Boxes, Objects of Vertu, etc.* (London: Sotheby’s, 7 May 1946), p. 10, lot 64, pl. VIII (repro.). Current location unknown.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Important Gold Boxes, Objects of Vertu and Portrait Miniatures* (London: Christie’s, 9 December 2003), lot 83. Sold for \$45,613.