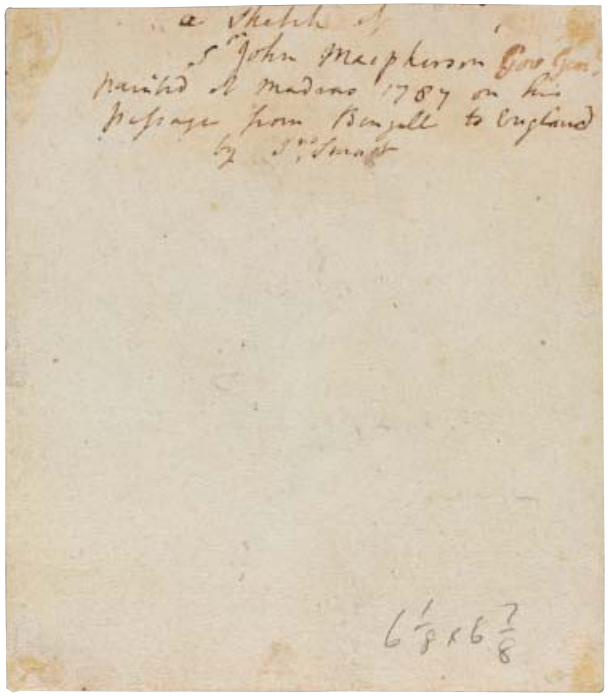
a Sketch of
Sr John Macpherson Bart
painted at Madras 1787 on his
passage from Bengall to England
by Sr Smart
6 1/8 x 6 7/8

JOHN SMART (British, 1741–1811)

Portrait of Sir John Macpherson, 1st Baronet, Governor-General of India

1787

Watercolor and gouache heightened with white gouache on paper; unframed, 9.1 x 7.9 cm (3½ x 3 in.)

Signature: J S / 1787 / Madras; inscribed on back of paper in brown ink: a sketch of Sir John Macpherson painted at Madras, 1787, on his passage from Bengall [sic] to England by J^no^ Smart; in graphite at lower right: 6⅛ x 6⅞

Setting: unframed

Bequest of Mrs. A. Dean Perry, 1997.80

Provenance

Until 1811
John Smart (1741–1811); by inheritance to his son John James Smart (1805–1870).

1811–70
John James Smart; by inheritance to his daughter Mary Ann Bose (née Smart, 1856–1934).

1870–1934
Mary Ann Bose; by inheritance to her son William Henry Bose (1875–1957), great-grandson of the artist.

1934–37
William Henry Bose.

1937
Sold Christie's (London), February 15 (lot 43).[1]

After 1937
Colnaghi, London.

Before 1957
Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland); by inheritance to his daughter Helen Perry (née Greene, 1911–1996, Cleveland).

c. 1957–96
Helen Perry.

1996
Upon Helen Perry's death, held in trust by the estate.

1996–97
Estate of Helen Perry; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1997.

1997
The Cleveland Museum of Art.

1 Called "Portrait of Sir John Macpherson."

Exhibitions

None.

Bibliography

Foskett, Daphne. *John Smart: The Man and His Miniatures,* pp. 19, 70, 84. London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964.

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 great number were inherited by his son John James Smart, who in turn left them to his daughter Mary Ann Bose. Upon her death in 1934, they were divided between three of her children: William Henry Bose, Lilian Dyer, and Mabel Annie Busteed. It was from these three collections that they were sold at auction through Christie's, London, in February 1937, November 1937, and December 1936, respectively.[2]

Helen Perry (née Greene) left six drawings by John Smart to the Cleveland Museum of Art when she died in 1996. Perry was the granddaughter of one of the museum's founding members, Jeptha Homer Wade II, and the daughter of Edward B. Greene, who gave his renowned collection of portrait miniatures to the museum primarily during the 1940s. Several CMA curators were asked to

2 The catalogues for these three sales are reproduced in Daphne Foskett, *John Smart: The Man and His Miniatures* (London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1964), pp. 78–90. It is not known which, if any, drawings were retained by the family members.

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visit Perry's collection in 1988 as she updated her will and wished to know which works might be donated to the museum. After his visit, Michael Miller, assistant curator of prints and drawings, wrote the director Evan Turner that the "miniature portraits by John Smart of General McAllister [sic] and Mary Tadman are quite fine, but our drawings collection has never included material of the sort. I'd leave them to your judgment." Miller evidently was unaware of the ten Smart sketches that had been left to the museum during the 1940s by Edward Greene. Turner included the sketches of MacAlister and Tadman on the wish list he gave to Perry in 1989, but there is no record as to why the six drawings had not been previously bequeathed to the museum with the Greene collection. Perry did not collect miniatures or small portrait drawings, so it is likely that they were overlooked rather than specially retained for her by her father. Greene's love of miniatures had previously influenced his daughter's support for the museum; in 1960 she gave $9,600 for the purchase of a miniature by Nicholas Hilliard in memory of her father.[3] Among the works by Smart in Cleveland's collection, the group bequeathed by Perry has benefited considerably from recent research that has revealed sitters' identities and reunited drawings with their miniature counterparts on ivory.

The sitter's head and shoulders face left. He smiles slightly and has light blue eyes, with his powdered hair curled above the ear and tied *en queue*. He wears a green jacket edged in gold with gold buttons and dons a high white collar, a waistcoat, and a frilled cravat, each highlighted with white gouache. The nature of this work as a finished drawing rather than exclusively a preparatory sketch for a miniature on ivory is evident in the degree of finish of the sitter's clothing, which is painted to the oval termination within a border of pale blue gouache. A Colnaghi label was removed from the verso after the work entered the museum's collection.

3 *Portrait of Baron Howard of Effingham,* 1576. Nicholas Hilliard (British, c. 1547–1619). Watercolor on vellum; 4.9 x 4.4 cm (1⅞ x 1¾ in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. A. Dean Perry in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Belden Greene 1960.39. The miniature was purchased from Agnew & Sons as "An Elizabethan Gallant."

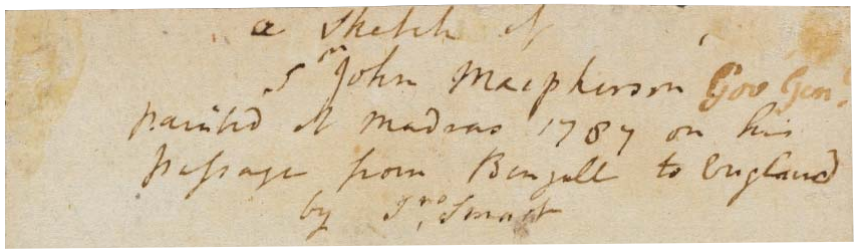

Figure 1. Verso inscription reading "a sketch of Sir John Macpherson Gov Gen. / painted at Madras 1787 on his / passage from Bengall [sic] to England / by Jno Smart" (detail).

Sir John Macpherson (1745–1821) was the son of a Scottish minister. His many tours of service with the East India Company were marred by corruption and scandal. He was made acting governor-general of India in 1785–86 between the resignation of Warren Hastings (1732–1818) and the succession by Lord Cornwallis (1738–1805). Macpherson was created a baronet in 1786 when he was removed from office, returning to England shortly thereafter. He was an inveterate bachelor; popular in society for his handsomeness, charm, and facility with languages; but also known for his avarice and fraudulence.[4]

The work is signed with Smart's initials and dated "1787 Madras" at the lower right. Macpherson was no longer governor-general in 1787 and would have been preparing to return to England when this portrait was painted. The drawing is inscribed on the back in the artist's hand: "a sketch of Sir John Macpherson painted at Madras, 1787, on his passage from Bengall [sic] to England by Jno Smart" (fig. 1). Smart did not return to England until 1795, so the word *passage* must be defined as "on his journey" rather than "aboard ship." At the time this portrait was taken, Macpherson was grappling with his premature removal from office and beginning to plot what would become many years of negotiations to regain his position or receive compensation for having lost it, though none of this emotional turmoil is visible in Smart's portrait. CORY KORKOW

4 See the (privately printed) pamphlet titled *The Case of Sir John Macpherson, Baronet, Late Governor General of India* (London: William Bulmer, 1809).