Portrait of Miss Fanny Andrews

John Downman



REF: 2583

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Description

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John Downman, A.R.A. (1750-1824)
Portrait of Miss Fanny Andrews

Inscribed on an old label attached to the backboard: Miss Fanny Andrews 1794 a Study for the Picture/ of Fanny in Dr Downman's poem of The Land/ of the Muses as added to Spencer's Fairy Queen/ She was niece to Mr Downman and Cousin to Lord Courtenay
Pencil and watercolour
21 by 17.8 cm., 8 ¾ by 7 ¼ in.

Provenance:
Captain Norman Colville (1893-1974);
Peter Chance (1911-1985);
Private Collection, UK

This is an illustration to a poem by John Downman's cousin Dr Hugh Downman (1740-1809). Miss Fanny Andrews is a character in his poem `The Land of the Muses'. Born in Exeter, Hugh went to Balliol College, Oxford before going up to Edinburgh to study medicine. He worked briefly in London before returning to his native city and established his practice. He was highly regarded for his amiable personality, moral standing and for being an able and kind doctor.

Whilst at Edinburgh, Hugh had lodged with the poet and orator, Thomas Blacklock and Hugh published 'Land of the Muses' a poem in the manner of Spencer in 1768, whilst still at university. His most successful poem, 'Infancy of the management of children: a poem in three books', published between 1774-6, ran to nine editions during his lifetime. He also published a number of plays and helped to translate an edition of Voltaire's work. In 1796 he founded a literary society in Exeter, 'The Society of Gentlemen', whose other members included the Cornish clergyman, poet and historian Richard Polwhele and Isaac d'Israeli, father of Benjamin Disraeli. He must have remained close to his artist cousin, as he remembered him in his will.

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