

Fig. 1: John Haslem (1808–1884), Edward Albert, Prince of Wales, 1846.

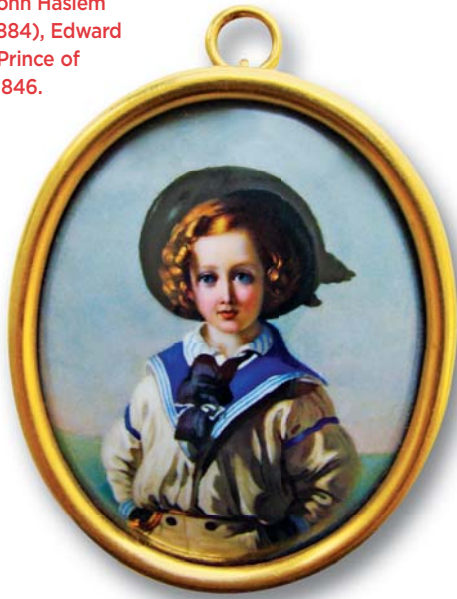


Fig. 2: Gertrude Massey (1868–1957), Future Kings George VI & Edward VIII, signed and dated 1901.



Portrait Miniatures of Children

by Elle Shushan



Fig. 3: Thomas Hazelhurst (1740–1821), Henry Hatton and John Hatton, signed, circa 1795.



When, in 1539, Henry VIII received word that the Duke of Cleves had two marriageable sisters, the king quickly dispatched his court painter, Hans Holbein (1497–1543), to paint miniatures of both girls in order to facilitate his choice for queen number four. Though Henry did eventually marry Anne of Cleves, in the time it took the artist to make the trip, the king's wandering eye had become fixed on a local beauty, Catherine Howard. Henry, in whose court portrait miniatures were born, had already commissioned miniature likenesses of his previous wives. With these earlier portraits, those of the Cleves sisters, and the miniature Holbein would paint of the doomed Catherine Howard, a collecting tradition was born.

Over time, miniatures of children became more popular than those of wives. Again, the royals would lead the way. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were particularly fond of portraits of their nine children. Their eldest son,



Fig. 4: George Hargreaves (1797–1870),
Brother and sister, signed and dated 1841.

Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, was only five years old in 1846 when he was painted in his sailor suit by Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805–1873). The same year, miniaturist John Haslem (1808–1884) copied the portrait in enamel on gold (Fig.1). Proclaimed by Prime Minister Robert Peel as “the prettiest picture I have ever seen,” the Winterhalter portrait hangs in the Treasures Room of the Queen’s Gallery in Buckingham Palace. By tradition, the Haslem miniature was presented by Queen Victoria to a member of her household.

That Prince of Wales spent a lifetime trying to please his mother, the daunting Queen Victoria. Over fifty years later, he engaged miniaturist Gertrude Massey (1868–1957) to paint the queen’s dogs as a Christmas surprise. Massey’s work so pleased the prince, he employed her again in 1901 to paint his two eldest grandsons, the future kings Edward VIII and George VI. Portrayed in sailor suits as their grandfather had been in his 1846 por-

trait, this miniature descended in the family of the artist (Fig. 2).

As early as the reign of Henry VIII’s daughter, Elizabeth I, portrait miniatures were adopted outside the realm of royalty. As soon as they could afford it, the wealthy classes embraced the art.

Though London, with its profusion of Royal Academy trained artists, would seem to be the obvious place to look for the finest miniaturists, regional communities were also home to miniaturists of impressive prominence. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the industrial city of Liverpool had developed both a newly prosperous population eager for miniature paintings and a sparkling creative community that could supply them.

John Hatton and Henry Hatton, scions of an affluent Liverpool merchant, were the subjects of some of the finest work by Liverpool Academy artist Thomas Hazelhurst (1740–1821) (Fig. 3). John (1792–1869) grew up to be a shipping magnate and was said to be



Fig. 5: Edward Nash (1778–1821),
Sedashew Rajah, circa 1805.



Fig. 6: James Peale (1749–1831), Boy with
the initials JFEC, signed and dated 1802.



Fig. 7: Rebecca Burd Peale Patterson (early 20th century), *Chums*, signed, circa 1921.



Fig. 9: Anthony Meucci (fl. America 1818–1837), *Young girl*, signed, circa 1825.



Fig. 8: Sarah Goodridge (1788–1853), *Young boy with his dog*, circa 1825.

heavily involved in the American slave trade. His brother Henry (1793–1801) did not survive childhood. Both miniatures, painted circa 1795, are signed with initials on the lower left, set in identical gold cases with bright work borders, and each bears the boys' initials engraved on the reverse.

Fifty years later, another member of the Liverpool Academy painted another pair of siblings (Fig. 4). Miniaturist George Hargreaves (1797–1870) came from a prominent family of Liverpool artists. His 1841 masterwork, set in the original red leather traveling case with sanded brass mat, epitomizes the romance of Victorian portraiture in its enchanting imagery of children on a river bank chasing a butterfly.

In addition to rich regional cities, there were fortunes to be made in the British colonies. The most coveted was India. When, in circa 1805, British miniaturist Edward Nash (1778–1821) painted the infant Sedashew Rajah (Fig. 5) in Coorg, in southern India, he

was completing his large commission of the children of the royal family. Pictured in an embroidered muslin *jama*, large jeweled pendant, and a satin headdress, the little rajah is the idealization of royal India. Three miniatures by Nash of other children of the Ikkeri Arasu Dynasty are known.

Neither Nash nor the Liverpool artists mentioned here had thriving London careers, but all three succeeded in producing winsome and desirable portraits off the beaten path. A country considered at the time to meet this description was America. Though New York City artists, trained at the celebrated National Academy of Design, realized highly academic portraits, artists in the rest of the country produced their own quirky, regional distinctions.

In Philadelphia in 1802, James Peale (1749–1831), one of the patriarchs of America's most important and coveted artistic family, immortalized a young boy in a blue suit with the initials *JFEC* (Fig. 6). James Peale's portraits of children are rare—the few that are known rank among his finest works. Over a hundred years later, the last of the Peale family miniaturists, Rebecca Burd Peale Patterson (early 20th century) exhibited the equally fetching *Chums* at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (Fig. 7).

The most successful miniatures of children have life, movement, toys, and pets. Boston artist Sarah Goodridge (1788–1853), arguably America's most prominent female miniaturist, combined all four when she captured an enchanting scene of a boy in his high chair brushing his dog (Fig. 8).

At the other end of the country, itinerant Italian émigré artist, Anthony Meucci (fl. America 1818–1837), who worked in New Orleans as a theatre set painter, employed the Continental technique of working in gouache to render a very American girl with red hair and a silver rattle (Fig. 9). As naïve as the Goodridge baby is finished, both are captivating in their own way.

Two of America's most renowned and desirable artists of portrait miniatures



Fig. 11: John Carlin (1813-1891),
Young boy, signed, circa 1845.



Fig. 10: John Carlin (1813-1891),
John Austin and George Austin,
both signed, 1848 and 1852.



Fig. 12: Mrs. Moses B. Russell, née Clarissa Peters (1809–1854), attributed, Baby boy with bird, circa 1850. Photograph courtesy of Joan R. Brownstein.



Fig. 14: Mrs. Moses B. Russell, née Clarissa Peters (1809–1854), attributed, Boy holding an orange, circa 1850.



Fig. 13: Mrs. Moses B. Russell, née Clarissa Peters (1809–1854), attributed, Two girls with doll, circa 1850. Photograph courtesy of Joan R. Brownstein.

specialized in miniatures of children. John Carlin (1813–1891), deaf from birth, trained in Paris and London before becoming one of New York City's most prominent society miniaturists. Of the over two thousand portraits documented in Carlin's account book (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), over half of them are children. Carlin's small, oval miniatures show his subjects floating in clouds, as seen in his portraits of brothers John and George Austin (Fig 10). His larger portraits, often over four inches high, empha-

size elaborate costume and full landscape backgrounds (Fig 11).

Rendered at the same time as Carlin's precise, realistic jewels, the miniatures attributed to Mrs. Moses B. Russell, née Clarissa Peters (1809–1854), employ many of the same devices, achieving a very different effect (Fig. 12). Adorned with stunning sunset backgrounds, flowers, baskets of fruit, pets, and toys, the portraits portray the children of New England's middle class. At their strongest, the portraits evoke a powerful sensitivity (Fig 13). At their

most engaging, the miniatures are diminutive folk art icons (Fig. 14).

Miniatures have always been the most private form of portraiture. Ultimately, the tradition hasn't changed since Henry VIII—personal appeal should be the only criteria when collecting them. [AFA](#)

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