

## ИЗОБРАЗИТЕЛЬНОЕ ИСКУССТВО

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**Lady Mary Fox, the mysterious story of a portrait\****L. V. Bardovskaya*

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The author suggests an attribution of the miniature portrait of Lady Mary Fox-Holland from the collection of Tsarskoye Selo Museum. It is a painted oval ivory plate. According to the old inventory numbers and records in the museum archive the portrait came from the collection of the Catherine Palace. On the reverse there is the pencil inscription with the name of the sitter — “Lady Mary Fox, afterwards Lady Holland”. She was the elder daughter of John Fitzpatrick, the Earl of Upper Ossory and Lady Evelina Leveson Gower, the eldest daughter of the Earl Gower. Mary was descended from one of the most famous and wealthy aristocratic families in Britain. The portrait have not been published until now. The author, researching the history of the Fox-Holland family, elucidates the circumstances of the creation of the miniature and its author — English miniature portraitist Edward Miles. During the period of his apprenticeship (1772–92), he created the miniature copy of the original portrait made by his teacher Joshua Reynolds in 1769. The original by Reynolds is still in the collection of the Holland family. The miniature copy was taken by Miles to Russia in 1797 as a recommendation together with the letter of Count Semen Vorontsov. Miles, being a court painter of Paul I and Alexander I until 1807, produced a series of miniature portraits of the imperial families. The miniature portrait of Mary Fox-Holland is stylistically similar to his other copies of Reynold’s original paintings.

*Keywords:* Tsarskoye Selo, miniature, ivory, Mary Fitzpatrick, Lady Fox-Holland, Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Geinsborough, Grand tour, Holland-house, Pompeo Batoni, Edward Miles, court painter.

In the Prints and Drawings collection at the Tsarskoe Selo State Museum a miniature portrait of a young lady on ivory has been kept for longer than anyone can remember. The sitter is depicted with two plaits, large pearls in her ears and a string of pearls in her chestnut hair. A brief inscription on the back of the panel identifies the sitter as: “Lady Mary Fox, afterwards Lady Holland” but until now the artist’s name remained a mystery<sup>1</sup>.

\* The article translated by Richard Temple.

<sup>1</sup> Portrait of Mary Fox Lady Holland. After 1769. Ivory, water-colors, gouache, oval 11×9 cm. The State Museum-Reserve Tsarskoe Selo, inv. n. 388-XI.



Fig. 1. Edward Miles. Lady Mary Fox. The State Museum-reserve Tsarskoe Selo



Fig. 2. Thomas Gainsborough. Mary Fox. 1764–1765. Accessed February 20, 2018, [http://www.gardenvisit.com/book/london\\_and\\_its\\_environs\\_1927/12\\_knightsbridge\\_and\\_kensington/holland\\_house\\_and\\_leighton\\_house](http://www.gardenvisit.com/book/london_and_its_environs_1927/12_knightsbridge_and_kensington/holland_house_and_leighton_house)

before the forthcoming marriage of the beautiful Mary. On 20, April, 1766, she became the wife of Stephen Fox, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Holland (1745–1774). Stephen Fox was a prominent

<sup>2</sup> At present, the portrait is probably kept in a private collection of the Earl Ilchester in Melbury, Dorset, United Kingdom.

The old inventory numbers on the panel and all the palace inventory lists confirm that the portrait was in the historical Catherine Palace collection, however there is no record showing the date of its acquisition. The miniature was originally set in a gilt frame but records show this was removed in the 1920s

According to the inscription, the young girl depicted in the portrait is Mary, who upon marriage became Lady Fox (1746–1778). She was the eldest daughter of John Fitzpatrick, the Earl of Upper Ossory and Lady Evelina Levenson Gower, the eldest daughter of the Earl Gower. She was descended from one of the most famous and wealthy aristocratic families in Britain, whose members are listed in the Irish peerage (fig. 1).

It is hard to imagine that a charming young girl from such a noble family would not sit for the fashionable painters of her time in the country where the art of portraiture reached its full flowering. Britain, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, gave the world an abundance of eminent painters who created a unique portrait gallery of members of the British aristocracy.

My research proved fruitful: I discovered that, at one time, in the family mansion — Holland House in Kensington, London — there was a portrait of young Mary Fitzpatrick as an unmarried elegant 18-year-old. It was the work of Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788). The portrait is listed in the inventory of the contents of Holland House and is well known from the published photo<sup>2</sup>.

The portrait was painted by the celebrated Thomas Gainsborough during the winter of 1764–1765 [1]. The figure of the attractive, elegant young lady is set against a plain monochrome background (fig. 2). In her pose and costume, in the turn of her head one can sense her aristocratic dignity. This is a classic, realistic portrait, truthful and accurate. Clearly, the portrait was commissioned from a fashionable artist

figure in England in the second half of the 18th century: an Eton graduate, a British peer, a leading figure of the Whig party, and a Member of Parliament (fig. 3). Holland House dates from the Tudor period; it was built in 1605 and was bought by Stephen Fox's father, Henry Fox, 1st Baron Holland. Situated in Kensington, a fashionable district of London then as now, it was well known for its celebrated collection of art, and became a fashionable salon attracting aristocrats and beauties as well as artists, poets, philosophers and statesmen<sup>3</sup> [2, p. XI–XII].

After the wedding Mary and her young husband set off on the Grand Tour of Italy, as was the custom among the aristocracy at the time [3]. They spent the winter of 1766–1767 there. In early March 1767 the Fitzpatrick and the Fox-Holland families — the parents, relatives and friends of the newlyweds — arrived together in Naples. Later, the young couple moved to Rome and stayed there for an extended period, seeing the sights of the city and the surrounding countryside (fig. 4).

Young Mary Fox, now Baroness Lady Holland, sat for another portrait, this time commissioned in Rome during the spring of 1767 from the celebrated artist Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787), who painted a large knee-length portrait, today deemed one of his finest works. It was the height of fashion to sit for a Batoni portrait often against a background of Roman antiquities. Indeed, it was considered almost an obligatory part of the Grand Tour among the English aristocracy. Batoni painted more than two hundred similar portraits of English clients (fig. 5) [4].

In this work Batoni chose not to include ancient Roman buildings, as he often did in such portraits. He painted the young baroness holding a small dog in her arms, against a background consisting of classical columns partly viewed behind the folds of a simple curtain.



Fig. 3. Portrait of Mary Fox — 2nd Lady Holland. Engraved by W. Bockerell after a portrait of Sir Joshua Reynolds [11, p. 266]



Рис. 4. Portrait of Mary Fox (nee Fitzpatrick) Lady Holland. Engraved by A. Turrell after a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds. National Portrait Gallery. London, inv. n. NPG D35917

<sup>3</sup> The Holland House in Kensington, London, was originally the residence of the Countess Ilchester. The building of the Tudor style was built by John Thorpe in 1607. The mansion was destroyed during the bombing of London on September 27, 1940. Linda Kelly, the researcher of the Hollands family collection, points out that “pictures of the Holland house, books and furniture were saved from fire, and are now in Melbury, Dorset. We can only be grateful to Lord Ilchester for his foresight. On September 27, 1940, the Holland House was destroyed by horrible bombs” [1, p. XI–XII].





Fig. 5. Pompeo Batoni. Lady Mary Fox. 1767. Private collection. Accessed February 20, 2018, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Batoni\\_lady\\_mary\\_fox.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Batoni_lady_mary_fox.jpg)

British antique dealer Gavin Hamilton from 1769 to 1770 [7]. Here he acted as an antiquarian — a researcher and a restorer of the ancient world, who reconstructed from fragments the original look of antique Roman art. Piranesi's restoration workshop, which also served as an antique shop, was located in the Palazzo Tomatti near Piazza di Spagna in Rome, a district popular with wealthy travellers, where Stephen and Mary Holland and their parents chose to stay during their time in Rome. Mary visited Piranesi's gallery and bought his engravings. She was a frequent customer, and they seem to have become friends during that period. Some years later, when publishing an album of his engravings in 1778, the master dedicated one of the printed sheets from the series "Vases, candelabra, grave stones, sarcophagi, tripods, lamps and antique ornaments" to Mary, in memory of her untimely death [8].

The Holland family, upon returning to England in 1769, commissioned another portrait of Mary from Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), a close friend of the family [9]. He had painted Mary Fox, Baroness Holland and several other family members, whose portraits were mentioned as being in the Breakfast room of the Holland House<sup>4</sup> [10, p. 100]. According to the inventory, both portraits — the work by Reynolds of 1769, as well as the portrait of 1764–1765 by Gainsborough, were hung in Holland House, on the walls of the so-called "Sir Joshua Reynolds room" until the building was destroyed by a bomb in

Mary Holland poses in an elegant grey travel suit known, in England and other European countries, as a "Brunswick" [5]. The dress was a fashionable novelty which was based on a German man's riding suit. A Brunswick gown was specially created for travelling and became fashionable in part due to this very portrait by Batoni. Wealthy English ladies, planning to take the Grand Tour in Italy, began to commission such dresses [6, p. 56].

Batoni was at that time one of the most celebrated portrait painters in Rome, and so would have been an obvious choice for such clients as Mary Holland. His fame attracted the English nobility to his studio. While sitting for him, Mary Fox, Baroness Holland, would meet his renowned contemporary and friend, the engraver and architect Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778). He was famous for his series of prints "Antiquities of Rome", in which he depicted various ancient monuments of the city. Piranesi took part in archaeological excavations at Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, where he worked alongside the

<sup>4</sup> After the death of her husband Stephen in 1774, the Baroness died of consumption in 1778, and their daughter Caroline and son Henry remained orphans.

1940 [11]. The 1769 Reynolds's portrait is known from the later engravings by Walker Bockerell, Arthur Turrell (1871–1910), and other reproductions<sup>5</sup> [2, p. XI–XII; 7, p. 266].

Joshua Reynolds and the Fox-Holland family were linked by ties of friendship and, as members of the Whig party, by a shared view of the contemporary political scene. Although the artist knew Mary's husband, Stephen Fox, he was better acquainted with his brother, Charles James Fox (1749–1806), the famous English statesman, orator, member and then leader of the Whigs. The family collection of portraits by Reynolds hung in Holland House in a special room named after the artist [12].

The miniature on ivory from the collection of the Catherine Palace in Tsarskoye Selo is clearly a small copy of the 1769 half-length portrait by Reynolds. There is only one difference: the miniaturist made the portrait in oval form, slightly cutting off the right elbow and part of the stone pedestal, on which the model rests, as a result. If we compare the miniature with the portraits by Gainsborough and Batoni, we clearly see that it is, indeed, Mary Fitzpatrick, in marriage Lady Fox, 2nd Baroness Holland, represented in all three.

One can see why many contemporaries were enchanted by the charming image of a young lady rendered in this portrait. She is in a calm and happy mood, which, perhaps, was her nature. The slight inclination of her head, the cascade of chestnut hair adorned with scarlet ribbons and a string of large pearls, her large expressive eyes framed by dark eyebrows, the classical nose, her ruby lips — all create a unique and instantly recognizable image of a beauty from the high society. Lady Mary Fox seems to be of an artistic nature: she does not only follow fashion, she definitely changes it, strengthens it, and maybe even creates it. An unusual detail of her original hairstyle catches the viewer's eye: one part of her hair is plaited, while the other, in the form of a curl, entwined with pearls and a ribbon, rests on her shoulder. This charming image, with a hint of refined bohemian life, reflects the style of the *jeunesse dorée* of high society in 18<sup>th</sup>-century London.

The problem of attribution of the miniature portrait is not straightforward. It is known that in 1771 Reynolds articulated an apprentice, Edward Miles (1752–1828), a talented young man who Reynolds employed to paint miniature copies of his large portraits<sup>6</sup>. Silas Neville, the Norfolk doctor, in his diary noted that Miles' miniature had amazing portrait identity. In 1772, Neville recorded that he saw Miles' miniature of the portrait of Lord Carlain by J. Reynolds, and believed that the young artist was respected by Sir Joshua, was promising and would become a good painter [13, p. 348]. Thanks to these copies and his own miniature portraits, which he regularly exhibited at the Royal Academy, Miles acquired fame and clients among the English nobility, including Queen Charlotte and other members of the Royal family.

After Reynolds's death in 1792, Miles decided to try his luck in Russia. In August 1797, the Russian ambassador to London, Count Semion Vorontsov, wrote a letter of recommendation for Miles on behalf of Princess Augusta, the daughter of King George II, to take during his visit to Petersburg: "Mr. Miles, an artist-miniaturist who painted por-

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<sup>5</sup> J. Reynolds. Portrait of Mary Fox Baroness Holland. 1769. Private collection. Melbury, Dorset, UK [1, p. XI–XII]. Engraving by Walker Bockerell is reproduced in: *The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox. 1745–1826* [7, p. 266]. Engraving by Arthur Turrell "Portrait of Mary Fox (nee Fitzpatrick) Lady Holland" after a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds. National Portrait Gallery, London, inv. n. NPG D35917.

<sup>6</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biographies. Edward Miles was an English painter and miniaturist. He was born and worked in Great Yarmouth. In 1771, he moved to London, where he made perhaps his first dated work — a pen-and-ink portrait of Silas Neville, the Norfolk doctor and author of the *Diary, 1771* (State Archives of Norfolk County).

traits of the entire British Royal family very well and goodness knows why he decided he would achieve greater success in Russia than in London. The second daughter of the King, Princess Augusta, is patronising this artist in every way. She asked me via Mademoiselle Gomm, and also honored me, asking me personally to recommend him to the Empress” [14, p. 501; 13, p. 348]. Thanks to such influential patronage, Edward Miles was well received at the court of the Emperor Paul I. On 7, October, 1797, the Emperor’s wife, Maria Feodorovna, wrote to Vorontsov saying that the artist was painting her portrait and had already completed a portrait of her daughter the Grand Duchess Alexandra Pavlovna: “The artist Miles, patronised by Princess Augusta, has arrived: he is drawing my eldest daughter. Today he has painted me; his talent is indisputable, he has extremely succeeded with my daughter’s portrait” [15, p. 340].

However, in 1798, the Empress wrote to the ambassador: “The artist Miles has little success. He does not possess a considerable talent, and we already have Ritt, who costs much more than Miles” [13, p. 349]. Even so Miles who seems to have fallen out of fashion, continued to live and work in Petersburg until 1807 [16]. During the reign of Alexander I, Miles once again became a court painter. It is known that he painted portraits of the tsar and his wife Elizaveta Alekseevna (Art Museum, Philadelphia). However, his works are still little known in the museums of Russia<sup>7</sup> [17, p. 44–8; 18, p. 80]. In 1806–807, he left Russia and travelled to America, living in Philadelphia for the rest of his life. He was noted as an active member of the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts [19].

The quality of the miniature from the collection of Tsarskoe Selo Museum together with the resemblance to Reynolds’ style leads us to suggest the hand of Edward Miles. This portrait of Mary Fox Holland is stylistically close to other well-known works by Miles: miniature copies of portraits by Reynolds of Sir William Beachey (1785, Metropolitan Museum, New York) or that of Miss Frances Kemble (c. 1785, private collection, UK).

Here, the influence of Reynolds’ original work is clear, while in his own miniature portraits (for example, in the collection of the Pavlovsk Palace Museum), Miles’s drawing is more accurate and his brushwork somewhat closer to watercolor in manner<sup>8</sup> [20, p. 134–138].

It is possible that the miniature was brought to Russia by Miles, along with his letter of recommendation, in order to demonstrate his skill. Perhaps, Miles, the author (as we believe him to be) of the miniature copy of the portrait of Mary Fox, pinned his hopes on this miniature, trusting that a small portrait of a beautiful lady from the Fox family, well known in Russia, would promote his career and open doors to the aristocracy. He could also believe that the famous name of Joshua Reynolds known to the Russian court and to Empress Catherine the Great personally thanks to “Infant Hercules Strangling Serpents” may help his career<sup>9</sup> [21, p. 169–181].

There are other possible reasons for bringing the miniature to the Russian Imperial Court in Tsarskoye Selo. The Princess Augusta of Great Britain (1737–1813), who intro-

<sup>7</sup> Edward Miles. Grand Duchess Alexandra Pavlovna. Ivory, watercolor, gouache, 9,2×8,2 oval. The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, inv. n. 3138.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Miles. Portraits: Grand Duchess Alexandra Pavlovna, 1797 (inv. n. ЦХ-115/1-XI), Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, ca. 1797 (inv. n. ЦХ-112/2-XI), the Empress Maria Feodorovna with her daughters Alexandra and Elena, ca. 1797 (inv. n. ЦХ-122/1-XI), Grand Duke Nicholas Pavlovich (?), ca. 1798 (inv. n. ЦХ-108/1-XI).

<sup>9</sup> In 1785, Joshua Reynolds was commissioned by Catherine II of Russia to paint a picture. He painted “Infant Hercules Strangling Serpents” (State Hermitage, St. Petersburg).

duced her court painter Edward Myles to Russia, was the daughter of Augusta Saxe-Gotha, Princess of Wales (1719–1772), who, in turn, was the second cousin of the Russian Empress Catherine II. It is interesting to note, in connection with these family ties, that in the description of the “miniature room” at Holland House, Princess Mary of Lichtenstein mentions “a miniature portrait of Catherine the Empress of Russia” [12, p. 247]. Catherine II also kept in touch with the famous younger brother of Stephen Fox — Charles James Fox (1749–1806) who was celebrated in Russia after his passionate speech in Parliament objecting to Pitt’s plans to interfere in Russian affairs. In 1790, a marble bust of Fox, wearing a toga in the antique style, was created by the sculptor Joseph Nollekens (1737–1823). The work was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1791 [22, p. 226].

Empress Catherine II was so delighted with Fox’s parliamentary speech that she personally commissioned her chancellor Count Bezborodko to buy the bust of Fox from the sculptor. A special copy of the work was cast in bronze for display at the Cameron Gallery in Tsarskoe Selo<sup>10</sup> [I, p. 53]. This provoked a response in England in the form of a rather scurrilous cartoon “The Rise of the Patriot”, in which Empress Catherine II is shown installing the bust of Fox as the philosophers Cicero and Demosthenes leap in horror off the pedestals in their niches.

Thus, as a result of the interconnections of personal interests, kinship contacts and political preferences, a miniature portrait of the beautiful lady and highly influential English aristocrat appeared in the collection of the Catherine Palace, bearing resemblance to Joshua Reynolds’ genius and reflecting memories of the Russian court life in the 18th century.

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<sup>10</sup> On the repair of furniture and ornaments of the Tsarskoye Selo Grotto: “This year (1792. — *L. B.*) on 10th of April a bronze bust and another one of white marble called Fox were brought by me from St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. I put the bronze bust at the colonnade (Cameron Gallery. — *L. B.*), and the marble one in the Morning Hall (Grotto pavilion. — *L. B.*). Architect Ilya Neelov, May 1, 1792” [22, p. 53].

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Статья предлагает атрибуцию миниатюрного портрета леди Мэри Фокс-Холланд из собрания ГМЗ «Царское Село», написанного на пластине слоновой кости. Старые инвентарные номера на пластине и записи во всех дворцовых описях свидетельствуют о том, что портрет изначально находился в Екатерининском дворце. Надпись на тыльной стороне указывает, что это Мэри, в замужестве леди Фокс (1746–1778) — старшая дочь Джона Фицпатрика, графа Верхнего Оссори, и леди Эвелины Левенсон Гауэр,



старшей дочери графа Гауэра. Она происходила из одной из самых известных и богатых аристократических семей Британии. Портрет до настоящего времени не был опубликован. Автор, исследуя историю известного английского аристократического рода Фокс-Холланд, выявила обстоятельства создания миниатюрного портрета, установила авторство английского миниатюриста Эдварда Майлза, который повторил в миниатюре портрет леди Фокс-Холланд работы своего учителя Джошуа Рейнольдса (1769 г.) в период своего ученичества (1772–1792). Оригинал Рейнольдса хранится в собрании семьи Холланд, о чем свидетельствуют описания. Миниатюрная копия была привезена в Россию вместе с рекомендательным письмом графа Семена Воронцова при поступлении Майлза на русскую службу в 1797 г. при императоре Павле I. В Петербурге Майлз прожил до 1807 г., где создал серию миниатюрных портретов императорской семьи Павла I и Александра I. Стилистически портрет Мэри Фокс-Холланд близок другим его миниатюрам по оригиналам Рейнольдса.

*Ключевые слова:* Царское Село, миниатюра на кости, Мэри Фицпатрик, леди Фокс — баронесса Холланд, Джошуа Рейнольдс, Томас Гейнсборо, Гранд тур, Холланд-хаус, Помпео Батони, Эдвард Майлз, придворный живописец.

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