

= Beauty Revealed =

Beauty Revealed is an 1828 self @-@ portrait by Sarah Goodridge , painted in miniature with watercolors on a piece of ivory . Depicting the artist 's bared breasts surrounded by pale cloth , the 6 @.@ 7 @-@ by @-@ 8 @-@ centimetre (2 @.@ 6 by 3 @.@ 1 in) painting ? originally on a paper backing ? is set in a modern case . Goodridge , aged forty when she completed the miniature , depicts breasts which appear imbued with a " balance , paleness , and buoyancy " by the harmony of light , color , and balance . The surrounding cloth draws the viewer to focus on them , leading to the body being " erased " .

Goodridge gifted the portrait to statesman Daniel Webster , who was a frequent subject and possibly a lover , following the death of his wife ; she may have intended to provoke him into marrying her . Although Webster married someone else , his family held onto the portrait until the 1980s , when it was auctioned at Christie 's and acquired by Gloria and Richard Manney in 1981 . The couple gifted / sold their collection of miniatures , including Beauty Revealed , to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2006 .

= = Description and context = =

Beauty Revealed is a self @-@ portrait by Sarah Goodridge , depicting her bared breasts , pink nipples , and a beauty mark . These are presented in a gradation of color , giving a three @-@ dimensional effect . Although Goodridge was aged forty when she painted this miniature , according to art critic Chris Packard her breasts seem younger , with a " balance , paleness , and buoyancy " which is imbued in part by the harmony of light , color , and balance . The breasts are framed by a swirl of pale cloth , which in parts reflects the light .

The 6 @.@ 7 @-@ by @-@ 8 @-@ centimetre (2 @.@ 6 by 3 @.@ 1 in) painting is set in a case ; it had originally been installed on a paper backing which had the date " 1828 " on the reverse . The work is a watercolor painting on ivory , thin enough for light to shine through and thus allow the depicted breasts to " glow " . This medium was common for American miniatures , but in this case also served as a simile for the flesh presented upon it .

Beauty Revealed was completed during a period of popularity of portrait miniatures , a medium which had been introduced in the United States in the late 18th century . By the time Goodridge completed her self @-@ portrait , miniatures were increasing in complexity and vibrance . The Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History describes Beauty Revealed as a play on the eye miniatures which were then popular as tokens of affection in England and France , but not common in the US . Such miniatures allowed portraits of loved ones to be carried by their suitors without revealing the sitters ' identities .

= = History = =

Goodridge was a prolific Boston @-@ based portrait miniature painter who had studied under Gilbert Stuart and Elkanah Tisdale . She had a long @-@ term association with Daniel Webster , a politician who began services as Senator from Massachusetts in 1827 . Webster sent her more than forty letters between 1827 and 1851 , and in time , his greetings to her became increasingly familiar ; his last letters were addressed to " My dear , good friend " , which was out of character . She , meanwhile , painted him more than a dozen times , and left her hometown of Boston to visit him in Washington , D.C. at least twice , once in 1828 after his first wife 's death and again in 1841 ? 42 , when Webster was separated from his second wife .

Goodridge completed Beauty Revealed in 1828 , likely from looking at herself in a mirror . Several works have been cited as possible inspirations , including John Vanderlyn 's Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos and Horatio Greenough 's sculpture Venus Victrix . Goodridge sent her portrait to Webster when he was a new widower , and , based on its miniature format , it was likely intended for his eyes alone . The American art critic John Updike suggests that the artist intended it to offer herself to Webster ; he writes that the bared breasts appear to say " We are yours for the taking , in

all our ivory loveliness , with our tenderly stippled nipples " . Ultimately , however , Webster married another , wealthier woman .

After Webster 's death , Beauty Revealed continued to be handed down by his family , together with another self @-@ portrait Goodridge had sent him . The politician 's descendants held that Goodridge and Webster had been engaged . The painting was eventually auctioned through Christie 's , with a list price of \$ 15 @,@ 000 , and passed through Alexander Gallery of New York later that year before being purchased by New York @-@ based collectors Gloria Manney and her husband Richard . The couple included Beauty Revealed in the exhibition " Tokens of Affection : The Portrait Miniature in America " in 1991 , which toured to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) in New York , the National Museum of American Art in Washington , D.C. , and the Art Institute of Chicago .

Beauty Revealed was one of more than three hundred portrait miniatures compiled by the couple , who gave it to the Met in 2006 , as part of a gift / purchase arrangement of their collection . Carrie Rebora Barratt and Lori Zabar of the Met describe Goodridge 's self @-@ portrait as the most compelling of the " strange and wonderful " miniatures by minor artists in the collection . Two years later , Beauty Revealed was included in a retrospective , " The Philippe de Montebello Years : Curators Celebrate Three Decades of Acquisitions " , which showcased works acquired under the tenure of retiring Met director Philippe de Montebello . Holland Cotter of The New York Times highlighted Goodridge 's self @-@ portrait , describing it as " remarkable " . In 2009 , authors Jane Kamensky and Jill Lepore drew inspiration from Beauty Revealed (as well as other paintings , such as John Singleton Copley 's Boy with a Squirrel) for their novel Blindspot . As of 2014 , the Met 's website lists Beauty Revealed as not on display .

= = Analysis = =

Art historian Dale Johnson described Beauty Revealed as " strikingly realistic " , demonstrative of Goodridge 's ability to portray nuanced lights and shadows . She found the stippling and hatching used in creating the painting to be delicate . Writing in Antiques in 2012 , Randall L. Holton and Charles A. Gilday said that the painting continued to present a self which evokes a " frisson of erotic possibility " .

Packard wrote that Beauty Revealed served as a sort of visual synecdoche , representing the entirety of Goodridge through her breasts . As opposed to the " burdened " 1845 self @-@ portrait and the non @-@ eroticized one of 1830 , he found Beauty Revealed to forefront Goodridge and her demand for attention . Arguing that the clothing surrounding her breasts served to indicate a performance (similar to the curtains of vaudeville) , Packard described the viewer 's eyes being focused on the breasts , while the rest of Goodridge 's body was erased and abstracted . This , he stated , challenged the assumptions and stereotypes regarding the demure , homebound 19th @-@ century woman .