

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Emma Hart, Later Lady Hamilton, as "Nature"

George Romney (British, 1734–1802)

Date 1782

Medium Oil on canvas

Dimensions 29 7/8 x 24 3/4 in. (75.9 x 62.9 cm)

Credit Line Henry Clay Frick Bequest

Accession Number 1904.1.103

Currently On View

Second Floor, Room 34, Walnut Room

Commentary Emma Hart (1765–1815) was a woman of great beauty and charm who rose from humble origins to international fame. Charles Greville, whose mistress she was and who commissioned this portrait, educated her in music and literature, and Greville's uncle, Sir William Hamilton, British ambassador to Naples, brought her to Italy, where they were married. There she entertained company with her “attitudes” — a kind of Romantic aesthetic posturing achieved with the aid of shawls and classical draperies. Emma attracted the attention of Lord Horatio Nelson, with whom she had a notorious romantic liaison until his death at the Battle of Trafalgar. Although she inherited money from both Hamilton and Nelson, her extravagance led her into debt, and she died in poverty. This portrait was the first of more than twenty that Romney painted of his “divine lady,” many in the guise of characters from history, mythology, and literature. Source: *Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Collection History The Hon. Charles Greville, London. Sir William Hamilton. His sale, March 27, 1801, Christie's, Lot 30, sold to Lister Parker. Bought for 50 guineas in 1816 or 1818 by W.R.H. Fawkes, of Farnley Hall, Otley, Yorkshire.⁶ His heir, Francis Hawksorth Fawkes, of Farnley. Ayscough Fawkes. Sold by his descendent, F.H. Fawkes. C.J. Wertheimer. E. Cronier, Paris.⁷ Knoedler. Frick, 1904. Source: *Paintings in The Frick Collection: American, British, Dutch, Flemish and German. Volume I*. New York: The Frick Collection, 1968.