



## Abigail and Lucretia Callahan

### Date

about 1785

### Primary Maker

Ralph Earl

### Medium

oil on bed ticking mounted on paperboard

### Description

This is a half-length portrait of two girls. The older child stands to the left and faces forward. She has wavy, shoulder-length light-brown hair that is parted in the middle. Her eyes appear to be green, although a discolored varnish obscures the color. Her right shoulder is cut off at the left edge of the painting; her left shoulder appears to touch the other girl's right one. She wears a white dress with lace trim at the neck and floral designs painted with a low impasto in the fabric. At her waist is a light blue ribbon that is only partially visible above the grouping of hands at bottom left. The older girl's left arm is bent at the elbow, and the palm of that hand faces her body near her chest. The index finger on that hand is curled toward the body. The other fingers are in relaxed, though

extended, positions. Her right hand reaches under and holds the wrist of a disembodied forearm and hand that enter the composition at the lower part of the left edge. That disembodied hand is turned slightly toward the viewer to reveal an oblong, orange-colored fruit. The younger child stands to the right, with her left shoulder advanced and her head tilted to the viewer's right. Her hair is lighter brown than the other child's and is made up of many small curls. She has blue eyes. Like the other girl, she wears a white dress with lace trim, floral pattern, and blue sash at the waist. Her left arm crosses her body, and that hand reaches for the fruit in the hand that enters the painting from the left side of the painting. The younger girl's right arm is not visible. Earl rendered volumes simply, in nearly geometric forms. Light is implied to fall from the upper left to the lower right. The artist appears to have achieved shadows in the faces by painting yellow and red flesh tones over a gray or brown underpainting. The edges of both girls' fingers are rendered in dark red to suggest their volume. The background is light in the upper-left corner, darker at the upper center and center-right. The upper-right corner features a red curtain that drapes from top-center to center-right.

### Dimensions

board: 61.4 x 51 cm (24 3/16 x 20 1/16 in.)