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Illustration on p. 2: Paolo Veronese (Italian, 1528–1588). Detail of *Alessandro Vittoria*, ca. 1575. See fig. 1, p. 116.

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MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES FOR THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM JOURNAL

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ABBREVIATIONS

MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art
MMAB The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin
MMJ Metropolitan Museum Journal

Height precedes width and then depth in dimensions cited.

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VIR

**KATHARINE BAETJER
WITH MARJORIE SHELLEY,
CHARLOTTE HALE, AND CYNTHIA MOYER**

Benjamin Franklin, Ambassador to France: Portraits by Joseph Siffred Duplessis

The best-known portrait of Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) was painted by a French artist, Joseph Siffred Duplessis (1725–1802). For the better part of a century The Metropolitan Museum of Art has owned and exhibited the primary version of the so-called VIR Portrait, painted in 1778 in oil on canvas (fig. 1). It is the only one that is signed and dated, and it retains the elaborate carved and gilded frame in which it was exhibited at the 1779 Paris Salon. The cartouche on the frame is inscribed in Latin *VIR*, or “man,” and surely the usage arose from the fact that this singularly famous and accomplished individual needed no further identification. The primary objective of the present study has been to discover what relation might exist between the Museum’s iconic painting and an important pastel of the same sitter by the same artist in the New York Public Library (fig. 2). Very little known because, owing to its sensitivity to light,

fig. 1 Joseph Siffred Duplessis (French, 1725–1802). *Benjamin Franklin* (VIR Portrait or Fur Collar Portrait), 1778. Oil on canvas, oval, 28½ × 23 in. (72.4 × 58.4 cm). Signed, dated, and inscribed (right center): J.S. Duplessis / pinx. Paris / 1778. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931 (32.100.132)



fig. 2 Joseph Siffred Duplessis. *Benjamin Franklin (Gray Coat Portrait)*, ca. 1777–78. Pastel on parchment, 28¾ × 23½ in. (73 × 59.7 cm). The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations



fig. 3 Jean-Baptiste Greuze (French, 1725–1805). *Benjamin Franklin*, 1777. Pastel on paper, oval, 31½ × 25¼ in. (80 × 63.8 cm). Diplomatic Reception Rooms, United States Department of State, Washington, D.C., 1976 (73.6)

it is rarely exhibited. We hoped also to revisit the question of the dating of the pastel, and to establish how precisely a painted replica belonging to the Metropolitan Museum (and perhaps other replicas) conforms to the design of the primary version. Our findings, including new information about the frame, were presented in a 2016 dossier exhibition and are reviewed here in the wider context of Franklin portraits from the late 1770s and of the sitter's critically important role in European and American politics of that time.

Benjamin Franklin promoted the first major treaty of alliance between the fledgling United States of America and the government of Louis XVI, which was signed at Versailles on February 6, 1778.¹ Born in 1706, Franklin was then seventy-two years old and had visited France as a private citizen on two occasions in the 1760s. On his third visit, he went in an official capacity as the most important of three commissioners sent by the American Continental Congress. After a difficult voyage, he landed unannounced at a remote location in Brittany and, traveling by coach, reached Paris several

days before Christmas 1776. No later than March 1777 he had settled in Passy, between Paris and Versailles; he would live there until 1785. Franklin's reputation was well established in Paris, where he had long been lauded for his many literary and scientific achievements. As a prolific writer and inventor, and in his new role as a patriot, politician, and statesman, he was welcomed to France by everyone from the porter in the street to the most enlightened members of society. He was the subject of many portraits, the most important of which were painted between 1777 and 1780, when he was at the height of his fame.

In America, after many difficult months of combat, on October 17, 1777, the British under General John Burgoyne suffered a major defeat at Saratoga, New York, at the hands of the American general Horatio Gates. Franklin's negotiations with the French Crown then began to secure important results. Having promoted the treaty aligning his country with France and against Britain, he soon became the first American minister accredited to a foreign government. The American war was a hugely popular cause at court and in the capital, where the old diplomat's simplicity of dress and manner were admired. While his self-presentation—untidy, thin, receding, and unpowdered hair; a thick waist; plain clothes—was natural to him, certainly his “Quaker style” (he was not a Quaker) was carefully maintained for effect. The extent of public interest in Franklin is astonishing. Among those who portrayed him early in his stay were Jean Jacques Cafféri and Jean Antoine Houdon, whose terracotta portrait busts were shown at the Salons of 1777 and 1779 respectively;² Jean-Baptiste Nini, the first of whose terracotta plaques went into production in 1777;³ Augustin de Saint-Aubin, whose portrait drawing of Franklin in a fur hat was engraved by Charles Nicolas Cochin II for publication in 1778; and Jean Honoré Fragonard, two of whose allegorical drawings were engraved, by Marguerite Gérard and by the Abbé de Saint-Non, for publication in 1778.⁴ Nevertheless, Franklin did not like to pose, and, with the exception of Cafféri, few artists had the advantage of direct contact with the elderly American statesman. Among painters, he accorded sittings only to Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Anne Rosalie Bocquet Filleul, and Joseph Siffred Duplessis.

According to the contemporary writer and critic Louis Petit de Bachaumont, Greuze received a request to paint Franklin on March 8, 1777, from the well-known attorney Jean-Baptiste Jacques Elie de Beaumont.⁵ A pastel, which the artist retained, was completed by June 10 (fig. 3), and Beaumont's oil (private collection) seems to have been ready for delivery by July 25.



fig. 4 Anne Rosalie Bocquet Filleul (French, 1752–1794). *Benjamin Franklin*, ca. 1777–78. Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (91.1 × 72.4 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Honorable Walter H. Annenberg and Leonore Annenberg and the Annenberg Foundation, 2007 (2007-13-2)

Another oil by Greuze that may have been a direct commission is recorded in 1780 with a well-known private collector, the Abbé de Véri (now American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia). Franklin's wily character and apparent lack of pretension should have appealed to the unconventional Greuze, but his portraits of the American are austere and distant. Franklin draws away from the observer, his face and torso elongated. Atypically, the sitter wears a satin waistcoat and a satin sable-trimmed coat. The artist did not show at the Salons, but on September 6, 1777, he displayed a painting of Franklin to visitors to his studio. Greuze's portraits were not engraved.

Anne Rosalie Bocquet Filleul (1752–1794), a minor figure among women artists of the period, had direct access to Franklin because she was a neighbor.⁶ Doubtless she painted him at home, pointing to a map of Philadelphia and with his spectacles on the table

beside him (fig. 4). The project must have been initiated by her father, Blaise Bocquet, a fan painter and dealer who published a reproductive engraving after Filleul's Franklin by Louis Jacques Cathelin, an example of which was exhibited at the 1779 Salon. Madame Filleul, relatively inexperienced, may have seen one of Greuze's portraits, since the way she depicted Franklin's clothes and his elongated form are similar. Her painting, of someone she knew reasonably well, is in fact livelier and more engaging than his, although Cathelin's engraving lacks equivalent distinction. We would have had a very different picture of the patriot had any of these images captured public attention.

Duplessis is not well known in general and hardly at all outside France.⁷ He was born in 1725 at Carpentras and, like many other young artists from the south, received his further training in Rome, as a pupil of Pierre Subleyras. Duplessis left the South of France in 1751, arrived in Paris thereafter, and finally exhibited with the painters' guild, the Académie de Saint-Luc, in 1764. As a candidate member of the most important arts organization, the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, he first showed portraits at the 1769 Salon but was not admitted as a full member of the Académie until 1774, when he was nearing fifty. Louis XVI sat to Duplessis for a state portrait (lost; a replica is in the Musée Carnavalet, Paris), which was exhibited as number 119 in 1777, and he became the king's official painter. Two years later, he showed his portrait of Franklin in a red coat with a fur collar. The portrait and its astonishing frame, decorated with the sitter's attributes and symbols of his homeland, won praise after the opening of the Salon on August 25, 1779. Among the artist's other exhibits that year were portraits of the king's brother, the comte de Provence, and of the arts minister, the comte d'Angiviller. They were little noticed. Franklin, meanwhile, wrote his sister to say that "few Strangers in France have had the good Fortune to be so universally popular," noting, "My Face is now almost as well known as that of the Moon."⁸

In 1779 the VIR Portrait, or Fur Collar Portrait, as it is also called, was the property of Jacques Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont, a wealthy and energetic entrepreneur, a major supplier of goods to the American army, and a principal individual donor to the American cause. Franklin could hardly have refused his request for a likeness, but we know nothing else about the history of the painting and can assume only that it was retained by Le Ray at least until he was forced into bankruptcy in 1791. We have, however, been able to establish that sittings for the 1778 painting began with the pastel



fig. 5 X-radiograph of VIR Portrait (fig. 1)

fig. 6 X-radiograph of VIR Portrait (fig. 1) overlaid with a tracing of Gray Coat Portrait (fig. 2) (green lines)

belonging to the New York Public Library,⁹ which is often referred to as the Gray Coat Portrait. In accordance with the norms of the time, the artist would have presented himself to Franklin, a figure of importance, and it is likely that they met late in 1777 (previously Duplessis had been busy with the king's state portrait) or early in 1778 at the diplomat's residence in Passy. The pastel shows Franklin in a coat with a narrow collar worn over a waistcoat of the same pale color. Old labels on both the front of the nineteenth-century frame and the mounting on the reverse dating the portrait to 1783 have proved to be incorrect.¹⁰ The X-radiograph (fig. 5) of the 1778 oil painting made in 2016 reveals that Duplessis began with the Gray Coat design, demonstrating that, as we suspected, the pastel preceded it and is the source image. The pastel was examined at the Metropolitan Museum and it became possible to document the relation between the two more precisely. When a tracing of the pastel was laid over the X-radiograph of the painting, the contours were found to match closely (fig. 6). At some intermediate stage of work on the VIR Portrait, Duplessis added the distinctive fur collar (which partly obscures the original narrow collar in the

X-radiograph) and replaced the buttons on the coat with frogs. Doubtless the pastel was taken from life, as it is the simplest, the most natural, and the most acutely observed, even though it was not brought to a high degree of finish in the details. Less well known than the Fur Collar Portrait, it has not been imprinted on the public imagination to such a degree. Those who find the Gray Coat image familiar may be remembering one of the iterations of the hundred-dollar bill (figs. 7, 8).

Although pastels (sticks of color combining pigment with a powdery white mineral and a gum binder) were widely admired in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Franklin portrait is one of only a handful of works by Duplessis in the medium. Pastels were employed almost exclusively for finished portraits, but this is a rare preparatory study. The materials were portable and the work could be carried out fairly quickly, which in the present case would have been a convenience given the sitter's dislike of posing. Its immediacy evokes a sense of rapid execution, though it was constructed according to customary procedures. Technical examination reveals that the artist worked up the composition directly, developing the preliminary stage



fig. 7 United States of America
\$100 Federal Reserve Note, first
issued in 1929 (series 1928)

fig. 8 United States of America
\$100 Federal Reserve Note, first
issued in 2013 (series 2009)

of the likeness with a thin layer of green, carmine, and blue pastel. He enriched the palette with a range of closely related tints, which he rubbed and mixed with his fingers and a stump (a leather coil). The features and some other details were then delineated with the tips or broken edges of the colored sticks. It was perhaps in a spirit of experimentation that Duplessis chose parchment (animal skin prepared with lime) for the support. The artist may have selected the exceptionally large skin for its translucency; it also offered greater dimensions than handmade paper at the time. The skin was tacked to a stretcher and the pastel was applied to the napped, or suedelike, side. The artist did not use a fixative, which would have diminished the radiance of the scattered light reflected off the innumerable powdery particles.

Before Franklin departed for America in 1785, he presented the pastel to Louis Guillaume Le Veillard, who had been the mayor of Passy in the 1770s and was a close friend and neighbor with whom the diplomat played chess. Le Veillard accompanied the elderly statesman, much diminished in health, on the first stages of his journey. Franklin's friend was executed in 1794 during the exceptionally violent interval of the French Revolution known as the Terror, but he was survived by his wife and a daughter, who died unmarried in 1834. Through his first cousin, Marie, his estate passed

to her son Amédée Hureau de Sénarmont, and the pastel was held in the family until the death of the latter's son Henry in 1867. A year later it was purchased by John Bigelow, one of the founders of the New York Public Library. The agent was William Henry Huntington and the seller, a Monsieur de Sénarmont. Bigelow presented the work to the library in 1908, together with a manuscript copy of the statesman's autobiography and other related documents. The history of ownership is therefore uninterrupted and unimpeachable, which we wish were the case with our largely undocumented painting.

Early in 1777, in either February or March, Le Ray de Chaumont provided Franklin with a house on the property of his newly purchased Passy estate, the *château de Valentinois*.¹¹ The close professional and personal relationship that quickly developed between them suggests that Le Ray not only owned but also must have commissioned the 1778 portrait, particularly as he is listed as the owner in the checklist of the 1779 Salon. It may be imagined that the oval canvas was painted, in accordance with contemporary practice, in the artist's studio at the *palais du Louvre*. For help in rendering the likeness, Duplessis turned to the pastel, but, necessarily, he also scheduled one or more additional sittings, as there are differences not limited to the sitter's costume.

What type of portrait had Franklin chosen earlier in his life? Into his mid-sixties, he had worn a wig on formal occasions. The Scottish portraitist David Martin depicted him semiofficially in 1763, when, for example, he wore a well-groomed and powdered wig and an elaborate coat (*The White House, Washington, D.C.*). This was how he chose to appear two years after he began his service as commercial representative in London.¹² The following decade witnessed material differences in image making. Simplicity, while politically desirable, may also have afforded greater comfort to the aging diplomat. By all reports Franklin lived well, exercised little, and was healthy and quite vigorous for much of his final stay in France. In the course of the voyage over, however, he suffered from boils and an irritation of the skin, which spread from his head to his upper body and over time also afflicted his legs. He took warm baths regularly and consulted a physician who prescribed *Belloste's Pills* to alleviate these discomforts, but by October 1777 the pills had left him with a "Quantity of Water in [his mouth], and the Teeth . . . loosened."¹³ Franklin noted that he had lost three teeth and he stopped taking the medication, but the afflictions continued to bother him intermittently.¹⁴ Since his scalp was affected, he may have set his wig aside for reasons of health as well as of appearance. He was never again

portrayed with a wig, although for his official appearances at Versailles he would have been expected to dress much more formally and to have worn one.

On balance, in the VIR Portrait Franklin looks harder, heavier, and younger than he does in the pastel. The important circumstances of a Salon exhibition may have suggested these improvements. His face is full and his lips are well formed. But the receding upper lip indicates the loss of teeth in the intervening period.¹⁵ The sitter's posture may have been poor, and he appears to lean forward: one of the few things about the painting that disturbed visitors to the Salon was that they could not tell whether he was seated or standing (the pastel indicates a chair, but the canvas, because of its oval shape, does not, and this may be the cause of the confusion).¹⁶ While the first ten months of the year 1777 had been exceedingly difficult for both the elderly American patriot and the American cause, by 1778 the tide had turned. Red, the color of the coat, is an evocative, ennobling color, and for the French, fur was a reminder of the pioneering American spirit that they admired. Perhaps the collar and lining are intended to be red fox, which was hunted for its pelt in North America.

Among those who singled out the work for its nobility and truth to nature was Pierre Samuel Dupont, who also drew attention to the exceptional gilded and inscribed frame.¹⁷ In the words of Dupont, Franklin was without equal in his time, manifesting the vigor of Hercules, a statement that surely addresses the qualities of the man and not those of the elderly sitter as Duplessis presented him.¹⁸ On September 14 and 15, 1779, Elkanah Watson, a young American who had traveled to France to deliver dispatches to Franklin, visited the Salon at the Louvre to see the portrait; he presented a more realistic assessment. He found himself among what he described as "a prodigious current of human animals" on his way to see the "master piece of painting representing our Illustrious Patron Doctr. Franklin," and he noted that the work was "deposited (as a mark of particular respect) upon the left of his present Majesty."¹⁹ In fact, the royal portrait by Duplessis to which Watson referred represented not the king but his brother, distinguished by a white satin costume with decorations, wearing a heavily powdered wig, and painted on a larger canvas as convention dictated. In the case of Duplessis's Franklin, while it is important to distinguish between what was admired about the picture and what was admired about the man, it is fair to say the artist's reputation benefited greatly from the latter.

The carved and gilded oval frame most likely dates to 1778 as well and, based on its design, may have been

made by the celebrated designer and wood-carver François Charles Buteux.²⁰ The elaborate carving adds a further layer to the Franklin iconography and pays homage to his accomplishments as an American inventor and statesman. The ornament—including *rais de coeur* (lamb's tongue), *feuille enroulé* (twisted acanthus leaf and rod), and pearling—is characteristic of the Louis XVI style developed by Buteux while he was working as a wood-carver in the architectural bureau of the Crown. The oak base of the frame is gessoed and water-gilded with matte and burnished passages on ocher and red bole, or clay. The oval is surmounted by swags of olive, symbolizing peace and wisdom, and laurel, associated with a victor's crown. Above, branches of oak and American boxwood form a wreath. Entwined in the foliage is an undulating rattlesnake with a forked tongue. This reptile, indigenous only to North America, is the topic of a letter Franklin submitted anonymously to the *Pennsylvania Journal* in 1775. He elaborated on the animal's distinctive characteristics, noting that it portrayed "a strong picture of the temper and conduct of America."²¹ The drop pendant forms a cartouche or shield that secures a muskrat pelt with snarling teeth, a protruding tongue, claws, and a ratlike tail. Opposite the animal's head there is a Phrygian cap, already a symbol of liberty eleven years before the onset of the French Revolution. In the creation mythology of native North Americans, the muskrat was thought to have brought forth the earth from the primordial mud. The pelt twists around a club, emblematic of Hercules—who embodied truth, heroism, and determination. In addition, the Fur Collar Portrait was provided with a laudatory inscription by Juste or Justus Chevillet Feutry, which was appended to the 1778 engraving by Juste Chevillet.²²

There are no fewer than several dozen same-size replicas of Duplessis's VIR Portrait, and it is likely that many of them were painted while Franklin was in Paris and a subject of immediate interest. Visitors to the Salon who admired the work would have been among the first to seek out the artist to commission replicas. The American statesman understood the importance of circulating his image, and although he found himself obliged to give sittings to a number of painters, sculptors, and draftsmen while he was in France, he made it clear, as previously mentioned, that he did not enjoy doing so. He did not wish to sit for the same artist repeatedly, suggesting to at least one supplicant who applied for an original work that he should make do by commissioning a replica from Duplessis instead.²³ In general terms, Duplessis is reported to have worked slowly and to have had numerous helpers. Versions by

fig. 9 Workshop of Joseph Siffred Duplessis. *Benjamin Franklin*, 1779 or after. Oil on canvas, oval, 27 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (70.2 × 56.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of George A. Lucas, 1895 (95.21)



him and by his studio assistants, and other versions, probably less expensive, by independent hands, were wanted for the same reason that someone might now display a photograph of a famous politician he or she admires. The Metropolitan Museum is fortunate enough to own an excellent replica of the VIR Portrait as well (fig. 9), and the two are so close that in reproduction it is difficult to distinguish between them.

The contours of the Museum's second version match those of the first so precisely that the design can only have been transferred directly from one to the

other (fig. 10). Contemporary artists' manuals describe various methods for the common practice of replicating a design. The one most likely used by Duplessis and others working in his shop would have involved applying thin translucent paper to a glass covering the VIR Portrait, tracing the contours of the image, blackening the entire reverse of the translucent paper with charcoal or chalk (this is rather like using old-fashioned carbon paper), and incising the traced design onto another canvas with a stylus. Because there are hardly any changes in the palette, the replica must have been made

fig. 10 Ghosted image of VIR Portrait (fig. 1) overlaid with a tracing of Benjamin Franklin (fig. 9) (blue lines)



in the Duplessis studio. However, it remains impossible to say, other than as a matter of opinion, whether this replica is by the artist in its entirety or retouched by him, or (although in our opinion this is unlikely) whether it is by a talented imitator. Of the paintings and pastels that replicate the VIR Portrait, none is signed or dated. An inscription on the reverse of the replica at the Metropolitan Museum—*Peint par Duplessis pour obliger monsieur le vicomte De Buissey*²⁴—provides a contemporary context, and an original owner belonging to the Buissey family has been tentatively identified. Other inscriptions of the kind have not been found (and probably will not be, because by now it is likely that all of the replicas have been relined with newer canvas).

There are many good replicas of the VIR Portrait in the United States, and as several are in public collections, we extended our study by seeking out other

accessible examples of good quality, the contours of which might, with the help of colleagues, be traced. We applied to the North Carolina Museum of Art (fig. 11), Monticello, and the Huntington Library, which own replicas that we believe are contemporaneous. The first recorded owner of the replica in North Carolina was Isaac Cox Barnet, an American who moved to France in 1794 and died there in 1833.²⁵ Barnet was a commercial agent in Bordeaux and Le Havre and a consul in Brest and Paris. He married a French aristocrat, through whom he may have gained ownership of the North Carolina picture. We would argue that this painting could be by Duplessis himself. Another example of interest belonged to Thomas Jefferson and is at Monticello (fig. 12).²⁶ Jefferson bought the canvas in Paris on September 10, 1786, from Jean Valade, a little-known painter to the king, Academician, and art dealer.

fig. 11 Attributed to Joseph Siffred Duplessis. *Benjamin Franklin*, 1779 or after. Oil on canvas, oval, 27½ × 21½ in. (69.8 × 54.6 cm). North Carolina Museum of Art, Gift of the North Carolina Citizens Association (G.75.26.1)



It was sold to Jefferson as the work of Greuze, but in recent years it has been attributed to Valade himself. Eighteenth-century artists routinely made oil copies of oil paintings, but pastel replicas are few in number. We illustrate a pastel of high quality from the Huntington that is first recorded in New York in 1890 and has also been ascribed to Valade (*fig. 13*).²⁷ The Huntington and Monticello portraits have been associated owing to their identical, original, late eighteenth-century frames. Tracings of all three have been superimposed on the VIR Portrait: they all align closely (*fig. 14*). Since the

coloring is so similar, all must have emerged from the Duplessis workshop.²⁸ It comes as no surprise to discover that Duplessis always retained a replica of his famous Franklin portrait: he sent the replica to the Salon of 1801. In the Anglophone world, Duplessis's Benjamin Franklin joins Hans Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII and Gilbert Stuart's of George Washington in maintaining its uniquely persistent vitality over the centuries.

fig. 12 Workshop of Joseph Siffred Duplessis (attributed to Jean Valade [French, 1710–1787]). *Benjamin Franklin*, 1779 or after. Oil on canvas, oval, 28¾ × 23¾ in. (73 × 58.9 cm). Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello (1977–80)



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fig. 13 Workshop of Joseph Siffred Duplessis (attributed to Jean Valade). *Benjamin Franklin*, 1779 or after. Pastel on blue paper adhered to linen, oval, 28½ × 22½ in. (72.4 × 57.2 cm). The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens (53.4)



grateful to colleagues who took enormous trouble to supply tracings of works in their collections: David Steel of the North Carolina Museum of Art; Susan R. Stein at Monticello; Melinda McCurdy at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens; and Michiko Okaya of the Art Galleries and Collections, Lafayette College.

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fig. 14 Ghosted image of VIR Portrait (fig. 1) overlaid with tracings of three replicas: North Carolina Museum of Art (fig. 11; turquoise lines), Monticello (fig. 12; magenta lines), and Huntington Library (fig. 13; gold lines)



NOTES

- 1 Franklin's life is extensively documented, notably by the American Philosophical Society and Yale University in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, digitized from 1988 to the present by Packard Humanities Institute, www.franklinpapers.org. An account of the sitter's years in France is Schiff 2005.
- 2 The terracotta bust of Franklin by Jean Jacques Caffiéri (1725–1792) (Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris) was exhibited at the Salon of 1777 as number 218. Jean Antoine Houdon (1741–1828) showed a terracotta bust (location unknown) at the Salon of 1779 as number 221. A fine example by Houdon in marble, signed and dated 1778, is in the Metropolitan Museum (72.6).
- 3 Jean-Baptiste Nini (1717–1786), born in Urbino, moved to Paris no later than 1758 and in the 1760s began to make molded, circular terracotta medallions with profile bust portraits of famous contemporaries derived mostly from engravings, which circulated in the thousands. In 1771, Jacques Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont commissioned one of himself, and in 1772 entered into a contract with Nini whereby he sponsored the artisan's work. Nini was provided with facilities at the château de Chaumont, and profits were divided between the two men. Nini's first Franklin medallion was marketed in the spring of 1777. One of his models was based on a drawing by Thomas Walpole's son and another on a work by Anne Vallayer-Coster. See Schaeper 1995, pp. 24–26, 128–29. The Metropolitan Museum owns representations of Franklin by Nini in various materials; see www.metmuseum.org (83.2.170, 83.2.175, 83.2.178, 83.2.282, 01.31.4, 42.76.14), and a single roundel showing Le Ray de Chaumont (52.133.9).
- 4 See Augustin de Saint-Aubin (1736–1807), after Charles Nicolas Cochin II (1715–1790), *Benjamin Franklin*, etching, first state of five, 1777 (1986.1057); Marguerite Gérard (1761–1837), after Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806), *The Genius of Franklin*, etching, first state of two, 1778 (83.2.230). Both may be seen at www.metmuseum.org/art/collection. For the third, Jean Claude Richard, Abbé de Saint-Non (1727–1791), after Jean Honoré Fragonard, *Le Docteur Franklin couronné par la Liberté*, aquatint, see www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/50127.html.
- 5 Munhall 1997, pp. 22–26, ill. (American Philosophical Society portrait). The Metropolitan Museum owns a miniature signed and dated 1777 by Charles Paul Jérôme de Bréa (ca. 1739–1820) after one of Greuze's Franklin portraits (68.222.9). Franklin and Greuze belonged to the same Masonic lodge, where they subsequently met.
- 6 For the portrait by the "pretty and talented" Rose Filleul, see Sellers 1962, pp. 281–84, pl. 23. Claude-Anne Lopez (1966, pp. 227–28) suggests that Filleul's personal charms rather than her ability as a painter secured her the commission. Anne Rosalie Filleul (1752–1794), born Bocquet, exhibited at the Académie de Saint-Luc in 1774. She married Louis Filleul, as his third wife, in 1777, and through him became *gardienne* of the neighboring château de La Muette. Franklin was fond of young women and enjoyed Rose's company in particular; her wedding invitation survives among his papers. She worked in watercolor, pastels, and oils, making several portraits of the children of the comte d'Artois, youngest brother of Louis XVI (three pastels are at the Musée National du Château de Versailles). Owing to her connection with the royal family, she died by the guillotine. For the print after her painting by Louis Jacques Cathelin (1739–1804) (MMA 83.2.227), see Portalis and Béraldi 1880–82, vol. 1, p. 331, no. 23 ii, and Roux 1940, pp. 36–37, no. 80.
- 7 The principal sources are Belleudy 1913 and Chabaud 2003; and, on the general subject of Franklin portraits and the relation between the pastel and the painting by Duplessis in particular, the comprehensive work of Sellers 1962, especially pp. 124–37, 246–67, pls. 24 (Duplessis: "Fur Collar," no. 1), 25 (Duplessis: "Gray Coat," no. 1). We have proven that the pastel came first, which is what Sellers believed to be the case.
- 8 Benjamin Franklin to his sister Jane Mecom, October 25, 1779, for which see www.franklinpapers.org (633242 = 030-582b.html).
- 9 Documentation provided by the New York Public Library is gratefully acknowledged. In general on the subject of Duplessis's pastels, which are rare, and with thanks to Neil Jeffares, consult Duplessis's work online at www.pastellists.com/Articles/Duplessis.pdf. Other important pastels, both ovals, represent the Abbé Jourdan (Salon of 1769, no. 197) and the composer Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787), who moved to Paris in September 1773 and lived there for the balance of the decade. He sat to Duplessis for a portrait in oils in 1775 (Kunst-historisches Museum, Vienna). The pastel is unlocated. See also Belleudy 1913, pp. 49, 324 no. 75, 325 no. 82.
- 10 With respect to the date, the small identifying label on the front of the frame follows that on the reverse, which reads in part "BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, / A 77 ANS, / Peint par Jh Sd Duplessis, / 1783. / Donné par lui-même" (that is, to M. Le Veillard, as discussed below).
- 11 See Martindale 1977. Le Ray de Chaumont bought the property in August 1776 and installed Franklin there at no charge in February or March 1777.
- 12 The portrait may have been intended to advance the career of David Martin (1737–1797). The sitter was pleased with it and ordered a replica to be sent to America, which was unusual in that he intervened, and must have paid, directly. See Sellers 1962, pp. 328–40, pl. 8 (Martin, no. 1).
- 13 I thank Carol Santoleri for her work on this subject and reference a note dictated by Benjamin Franklin dated October 17, 1777, "Franklin's Description of His Ailments"; see www.franklinpapers.org (628572 = 025-077a.html).
- 14 Journal entries by Benjamin Franklin are dated October 4, 1778, to January 16, 1780. "Franklin's Journal of His Health," www.franklinpapers.org (630725 = 027-496a.html). Stacy Schiff (2005, p. 90) states that he had been ingesting mercury.
- 15 Barrymore Laurence Scherer's review in the *Wall Street Journal* of September 6, 2016, drew attention to the change in Franklin's face. I have also benefited from the advice of Albert L. Ousborne, D.D.S.
- 16 Friedrich Melchior Grimm, letter, October 1779, in Tourneux 1880, p. 327: "Le portrait . . . serait le chef-d'œuvre de M. Duplessis si la position du modèle était mieux indiquée; on ne sait s'il est debout ou s'il est assis, il a l'air d'un homme qui tombe." All contemporary criticism known to us is referred to on www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436236.
- 17 "On a mis au bas de son portrait cette laconique inscription: *Vir*. Il n'y a pas un trait de sa figure ni de sa vie qui la démente." Pierre Samuel Dupont, letter to Caroline Louise of Hesse-Darmstadt, margravine of Baden, in Dupont (1779) 1908, pp. 106–7.
- 18 " . . . qu'on n'en connaît pas de son âge qui lui soit égal. Toutes ses proportions annoncent la vigueur d'Hercule . . ." *ibid.*, p. 106.
- 19 "Journal no. 4, Travels in France," Elkanah Watson Papers, SC12579, box 1, New York State Library, quoted in Sellers 1962, p. 125.

- 20 For François Charles Buteux (1732–1788), see the discussion of a drawing in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs cited by Sarah Medlam in 2007.
- 21 John D. MacArthur, “Benjamin Franklin on the Rattlesnake as a Symbol of America,” reproduces the letter, signed “An American Guesser,” published in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, December 27, 1775, www.greatseal.com/symbols/rattlesnake.html.
- 22 Sellers 1962, p. 249, pl. 27 (Duplessis: “Fur Collar,” no. 2). For an illustration of the engraving by the German-born Juste or Justus Chevillet (1729–?1802), see Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. (<https://lccn.loc.gov/2003674085>). The engraving is inscribed: *Benjamin Franklin / Né à Boston, dans la nouvelle Angleterre, le 17 Janv. 1706 / Honneur du nouveau monde et de l'humanité, / Ce Sage aimable et vrai les guide et les éclaire; / Comme un autre Mentor, il cache à l'œil vulgaire, / Sous les traits d'un mortel, une divinité. Par M. Feutry / Duplessis Pinxit, Parisii 1778 / Chevillet Sculpsit / Tiré du Cabinet de M. Le Ray de Chaumont &ca.* The writer was Aimé Amboise Joseph Feutry (1720–1789).
- 23 John Clyde Oswald (1926, p. 10) provides a translation of an undated letter on the subject that was sent to a member of the Fournier family of type founders.
- 24 The inscription (*painted by Duplessis to / oblige monsieur the vicomte / de Buissy*) was photographed in 1931, before the painting was lined. In 2009 a three-quarter-length portrait by Duplessis of a seated man—said to have descended in the family of the sitter and inscribed on the stretcher *Peint par Duplessis and M de Buissy*—was acquired by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. It may be dated about 1780 and perhaps represents Pierre de Buissy (1737/43–1787), a guards officer and master of the hunt to the comte d’Artois, who could be the individual referred to in the inscription on our replica. Many thanks for their help in this matter go to our colleagues Paul Lang and Christopher Etheridge of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
- 25 See North Carolina Museum of Art, “ArtNC,” <http://artnc.org/works-of-art/benjamin-franklin-1706-1790>.
- 26 The painting was sold after Jefferson’s death to the Boston Athenæum, exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and long identified as the primary version. In 1977 it was reacquired by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation for Monticello (1977–80). See www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/benjamin-franklin-painting.
- 27 Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell in Bennett and Sargentson 2008, pp. 381–83, no. 143, color ill., and especially n. 11, as attributed to Jean Valade (1710–1787).
- 28 Michiko Okaya recently provided a tracing of a version of the Benjamin Franklin portrait by Duplessis belonging to Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania. Because the contours match and the coloring is similar, the painting must also be attributed to the Duplessis workshop.
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