



National Gallery of Art

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[Exhibition Curators](#)

[Related Activities](#)

[Online Resources](#)

[Sponsor Statement](#)

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Release Date: March 7, 2005

**GILBERT STUART, RENOWNED PORTRAITIST
OF AMERICA'S FIRST PRESIDENTS,
FEATURED IN FULL RETROSPECTIVE
AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART,
MARCH 27 THROUGH JULY 31, 2005**

Thirteen of Stuart's Iconic George Washington Portraits on View

Washington, DC—Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828), the most successful portraitist of the early American republic, is known for his paintings of some of the most famous men and women of his era. Stuart's first retrospective in nearly four decades includes 91 works demonstrating the artist's exceptional talent in the depiction of likeness and character. Representing all periods of the artist's long career, the exhibition features works drawn from private collections and museums in America and Europe. **Gilbert Stuart** is on view in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art from March 27 through July 31, 2005, a period that includes several patriotic holidays: Memorial Day, May 30; Flag Day, June 14; and Independence Day, July 4.

A highlight of the exhibition will be the display of thirteen of Stuart's portraits of George Washington, including his celebrated Lansdowne portrait of 1796, acquired in 2001 by the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC; the Vaughan likeness in the collection of the National Gallery of Art; and the unfinished Athenaeum image, co-owned by the National Portrait Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Organizers

Gilbert Stuart has been organized by the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art and is presented in Washington in association with the National Gallery of Art. The National Gallery of Art is pleased to present this exhibition during the major renovation of the National Portrait Gallery, scheduled to reopen in July 2006.

Exhibition Support

This exhibition is proudly sponsored by Target as part of its commitment to arts and education.

This exhibition and the acquisition of Gilbert Stuart's Lansdowne portrait have been made possible by the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation as a gift to the nation.

"The Gilbert Stuart exhibition is one of the most important ever presented by the National Portrait Gallery. We are grateful to our partner, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for co-organizing the exhibition, and to the National Gallery of Art, which has kindly lent its handsome galleries for **Gilbert Stuart** while ours are closed for renovation," said Marc Pachter, director, National Portrait Gallery. "Our enduring gratitude goes to the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation for supporting this exhibition and the Portrait Gallery's acquisition of Gilbert Stuart's great Lansdowne portrait as a gift to the nation."

"It is particularly gratifying to be presenting this exhibition in Washington, a city whose first leaders are so memorably captured in Stuart's portraits," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are very grateful to Target for once again supporting an important exhibition at the Gallery, making our rich cultural heritage available to all."

"At Target, we believe in making the arts accessible to as many audiences as possible," said Laysha Ward, vice president, community relations, Target Corporation. "Through our partnership with the National Gallery of Art, we are able to expand exposure to the arts, which creates awareness for other points of view and helps build stronger communities."

Target was the corporate sponsor of **Frederic Remington: The Color of Night** in 2003 and **The Cubist Paintings of Diego Rivera** in 2004 at the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The Exhibition

Arranged chronologically, the exhibition follows Stuart's career from its start in his hometown of Newport, Rhode Island, to its conclusion some five decades later in Boston, Massachusetts. It includes works painted in each of seven cities—Newport, London, Dublin, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Boston—in which the artist practiced his trade and attracted clientele. Stuart spent eighteen highly successful years in London and Dublin (1775–1793) before returning to America to embark on a career that included painting President George Washington and his successors.

The exhibition offers an unparalleled opportunity to view Stuart's presidential portraits spanning the first five administrations, a remarkable fact that has marked him as the preeminent painter of early national America. His most famous works are his portraits of George Washington, familiar today as the source of the face on the United States one-dollar bill. Thirteen Washington portraits are presented in the exhibition. During sittings with Washington in 1795 and 1796, Stuart created three portrait types: a bust-length facing to the viewer's right, known as the Vaughan portrait; another facing to the viewer's left, called the Athenaeum version; and a full-length known as the Lansdowne. The exhibition brings together two of the original paintings as well as several variations of each type. One room of the exhibition at the National Gallery of Art is devoted to four full-length portraits that have never before been seen together, and another, to the bust-length images.

In addition to the Washington portraits, on view are *John Adams* (c. 1800–1815) and *Abigail Smith Adams* (c. 1800–1815), paintings that Stuart finished more than a decade after they were begun. For the first time in more than a century, the portrait *Dolley Payne Todd Madison* (1804), in the collection of the White House, is shown together with *James Madison* (1804), from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. The exhibition also includes three portraits of Thomas Jefferson and two of James Monroe.

Gilbert Stuart

The son of a Scottish émigré who settled near Newport, Rhode Island, Gilbert Stuart demonstrated a precocious artistic talent. He honed his skills during a trip to Edinburgh in 1772, and upon his return to Newport, attracted the local merchants to sit for portraits. The first signs of his technical skill are apparent in relatively primitive works fashioned according to the model of contemporary American and Scottish portraiture, such as the ambitious double portrait of *Francis Malbone and his Brother Saunders* (1774), painted when the artist was not yet 20. His portrait of a close friend, *Benjamin Waterhouse* (1775), shows vast improvement, and after this accomplishment he sought additional training abroad.

In 1775, Stuart traveled to London to seek his fortune, securing a position in 1777 as an assistant to the renowned mentor of American expatriate painters, Benjamin West (1738–1820), historical painter to King George III. Stuart benefited greatly from this relationship and, with the exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts of his highly acclaimed full-length portrait *The Skater (William Grant)* (1782), the young American established his own studio in London. Stuart was also on excellent terms with the Academy's president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, who recommended him for many commissions, and print seller John Boydell, who, in 1782, ordered

fifteen portraits of contemporary artists from Stuart; five of them will be on view in the exhibition. As his career advanced, Stuart demonstrated what would become lifelong traits: an unusual insight into personalities, an outgoing and irreverent manner, and a somewhat rebellious spirit.

After a decade of success in London, Stuart moved to the thriving city of Dublin, executing grand commissions with little competition. Among his most important works from the period is a portrait of the newly appointed Lord Chancellor of Ireland, *John FitzGibbon* (1789–1790), whose regal pose Stuart would use again later in his career. His Irish clients—who received him as a British painter and commissioned paintings on the grand scale they expected from an artist trained in London—may have been surprised to learn of Stuart's American roots when he spoke of returning to his native soil to paint the new president of the United States.

In 1793, the artist sailed for New York, where he would make the proper connections to gain a sitting with President George Washington. He received numerous commissions, which he completed with great speed and skill, such as the portraits of a wealthy merchant and his wife, *Richard Yates* and *Catherine Brass Yates* (both 1793–1794). Ultimately, through his patron, the diplomat John Jay—whose portrait he painted in 1794—the necessary introductions were made, and assured of sittings with Washington, Stuart went to Philadelphia, then the nation's capital.

Stuart lived in Philadelphia until 1803, and, in addition to painting Washington, made portraits of many residents and visitors to the city. A tour-de-force, *Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton* (c. 1800–1802) portrays the so-called American Sappho, a poetess and great beauty who inspired one of Stuart's most captivating works. He followed the federal government to Washington, DC, where he continued to paint the country's leaders. A number of his sitters came from the diplomatic corps, resulting in works such as *Jerome Bonaparte* (1804) and a portrait of his stunning wife, *Elizabeth Patterson Bonaparte* (1804), painted just after their marriage.

Stuart spent his last two decades in Boston, where patrons greatly admired his work. Despite unpredictable delays and crankiness, which increased in Stuart's old age, his paintings never decreased in expression or skill. His portrait of a retired general, *Henry Knox* (1806), was a monumental success. His delicate likeness of a young lady on the eve of her marriage, *Lydia Smith* (c. 1808–1810), is a portrayal of great sensitivity. At a time when portraits were used in the United States to celebrate national achievement and promote public heroes as well as to celebrate the lives of private individuals, Stuart set a new standard of elegance and incisiveness in portraiture for his sitters, his colleagues, and his students.

Curators, Catalogue, and Related Activities

Carrie Rebora Barratt, curator of American paintings and sculpture and manager of the Henry R. Luce Center for the Study of American Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Ellen G. Miles, chair of the department of painting and sculpture, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, are the curators of the exhibition and authors of the exhibition catalogue, **Gilbert Stuart**. Published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with Yale University Press, the book is available in the Gallery Shops, from the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov/shop, or by phone at 1-800-697-9350 or (202) 842-6002 for \$65 in hardcover and \$45 in softcover (338 pages; 110 color, 176 b&w).

Ellen Miles will deliver the lecture, *Gilbert Stuart: An Introduction to the Exhibition*, on April 3 at 2:00 p.m. in the East Building Auditorium.

A public symposium, *The Edgar P. Richardson Symposium: Gilbert Stuart*, organized in conjunction with The National Portrait Gallery, takes place on April 16, from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., in the East Building Auditorium. The symposium, which will be moderated by the exhibition curators, will feature illustrated lectures by noted scholars of American history and portraiture, including Alex Kidson, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Joanne B. Freeman, Yale University; Linda J. Docherty, Bowdoin College; Wendy Bellion, University of Delaware; David S. Shields, University of South Carolina; and Susan Rather, University of Texas. A panel discussion led by William Pressly, University of Maryland, and Damie Stillman, University of Delaware, follows the lectures.

Four concerts featuring music from Stuart's time are being held in honor of the exhibition, featuring: the Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Oxford, England, on April 10; the National Gallery Orchestra with guest conductor Stephen Simon on April 17; fortepianist Penelope Crawford with organist Stephen Ackert on April 24; and glass armonicist Dean Shostak on May 1. For details visit www.nga.gov/programs/music.htm

A Family Weekend of free drop-in programs exploring **Gilbert Stuart** will be held Saturday, May 21, and Sunday, May 22. Children can learn about American history through a variety of performances, films, and hands-on art activities. Families are invited to meet George Washington, portrayed by an actor from Philadelphia's American Historical Theatre; hear music from Stuart's time on traditional instruments such as the glass armonica; create colonial wigs and bonnets; and more. This program is sponsored by Target as part of its commitment to arts and education. For details, call (202) 789-3030 or visit www.nga.gov/kids.

"Manners, Morals, and Missives: **Readings from Early American Writings**" will be held on May 10 and 14, 10:30 a.m.–4:45 p.m., in the West Building East Garden Court. Readers will present short passages from diaries, letters, pamphlets, poetry, and prose of Stuart's time.

Gallery Talks will be held on a variety of subjects, including *Gilbert Stuart*, *Stuart and the Early First Ladies*, *The Anecdotal Stuart*, *The American Presidents by Gilbert Stuart*, and *Gilbert Stuart in Philadelphia and Washington, 1795–1805*. Visit www.nga.gov/programs for details.

School tours are available April 20 through June 2, and are limited to 45 students. For information on scheduling a school tour, please visit www.nga.gov/education/school.shtm.

An **audio tour** of the Gilbert Stuart exhibition, narrated by National Gallery of Art director Earl A. Powell III, includes commentary by exhibition curators Ellen Miles and Carrie Reborra Barratt, and Franklin Kelly, senior curator of American and British paintings, National Gallery of Art.

There will be a full-color free brochure available at the exhibition entrance.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden, located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Ave. NW, are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the Fourth Street Entrance of the East or West Building to permit X-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. Any items larger than

17 X 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms. For the safety of the art work and visitors, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left at the checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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