

PORTRAITURE

FAME AND CELEBRITY

Portraits are often used to document and illustrate the lives of famous and significant individuals, recording and celebrating key moments, milestones and remarkable achievements in their lives such as inventions made, wars won, and continents discovered.

Portraits can also be actively used as a tool to manipulate, control and shape a person's position in the public sphere. They have the power to both make and break a person's reputation. Less well-known members of society might try to elevate and enhance their status through association with, and by commissioning portraits from, the most talented artists of the time.

Some portraits become famous objects in their own right, regardless of who the sitters are, due to the dazzling talent and celebrity of the artists who created them.

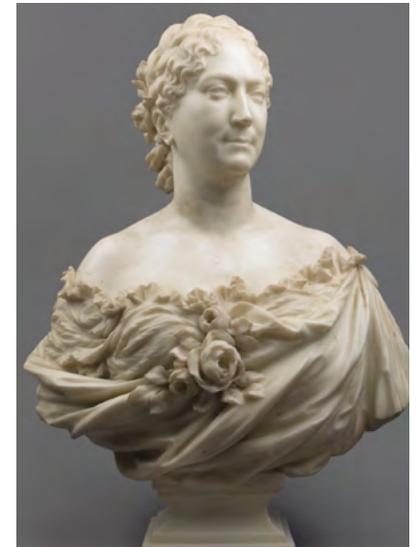
KEY WORKS



Diego Velázquez,
The Lady with a Fan, c. 1640



François Boucher
Madame de Pompadour, 1630



Charles Auguste Lebourg,
Bust of Lady Wallace, c. 1872

THE LADY WITH A FAN

PORTRAITURE
FAME AND CELEBRITY



TITLE The Lady with a Fan
DATE c. 1640
SIZE 95 x 70 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST Diego Velázquez
DATES 1599-1660
PLACE Spain

THE LADY WITH A FAN



IN DETAIL



THE LADY WITH A FAN



IN DETAIL



THE LADY WITH A FAN



IN DETAIL



THE PORTRAIT

The sombre colours of this portrait conceal the ongoing intrigue behind the sitter's identity. This is one of Velázquez's most famous portraits, and yet we are unsure who the sitter is. In this portrait a woman looks straight out at us. She seems serious and confident posing for the artist. She is wearing a black lace veil on her head, a black necklace, a low-cut bodice and a brown dress. She has delicate white lace gloves and holds an open fan. A prominent gold rosary with a blue ribbon on it hangs from her arm. The background is plain and there is no further detail in the image to provide a clue to who the sitter might be. The portrait has a limited palette, as is typical of a painting by Velázquez, and is mainly black, brown and white apart from a dash of blue, red and gold on the rosary that hangs from her arm.

It is unusual for a sitter of such an important artist not to be documented in the artist's record keeping. The questions that surround the portrait draw us in, as we search the image for clues about her identity. What is the importance of the large rosary? Why would someone modestly veil their head and display their religious faith yet wear such a provocative and low-cut neckline? Why

would the artist choose to include these conflicting messages? What might the image be communicating about her identity and personality?

The incredible talent of Diego Velázquez, the most celebrated portrait artist working in Spain at that time, means there is one thing we can be sure of: that we are certainly looking at a true and authentic likeness of the woman and her character.

WHO IS THE SITTEER?

For a long time it was believed that the unknown woman in this image was Spanish. As she was not recognisable as a lady painted from the royal court it was assumed that she must be from the artist's immediate circle – perhaps she is the artist's wife, or his daughter?

More recently it has been suggested that items of clothing worn by the woman, the decoration on the fan, the low neckline of her dress, and the style of her gloves, are French fashions and therefore she might have come from France. One Frenchwoman known to have been painted by Velázquez was the Duchess of Chevreuse, who was exiled in Spain after being forced to leave France for being implicated in a political plot. There are striking similarities between his painting of the Duchess of Chevreuse and the woman in *The Lady with a Fan*.

The identity continues to fascinate us and leaves us wondering not only who she might be, but how she came to have her portrait painted by the superstar artist of the time. Might Velázquez have been alluding to her exiled status by combining the dual aspects of her French identity and Spanish residency in a single image? If so, for what purpose was this message and who was meant to see it?

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Diego Velázquez (1599-1660) was the most important Spanish painter in the 17th century and was court painter to King Philip IV of Spain. He produced many portraits of the royal family, the wider royal household, and Spanish nobility. He is widely considered one of the greatest artists.

Velázquez painted in a natural style and was renowned for his ability to capture a realistic likeness and a sense of the sitter's character, whilst creating masterpieces that were unlike anything being produced within his time. He used few colours, preferring a simple palette and loose, impressionistic brushstrokes to create a lively realism of his subjects.

DISCUSS

How can we illustrate a person's national and community identity that might not otherwise be visible?

Is a portrait more interesting the less we know about it?

COMPARE



- Compare *The Lady with a Fan* with *Lady in a Mantilla*, also by Diego Velázquez, 1646, now in Chatsworth House, Derbyshire. Both portraits have been potentially identified as the Duchess of Chevreuse.



Diego Velázquez, *Lady in a Mantilla*,
c. 1646

Chatsworth House

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

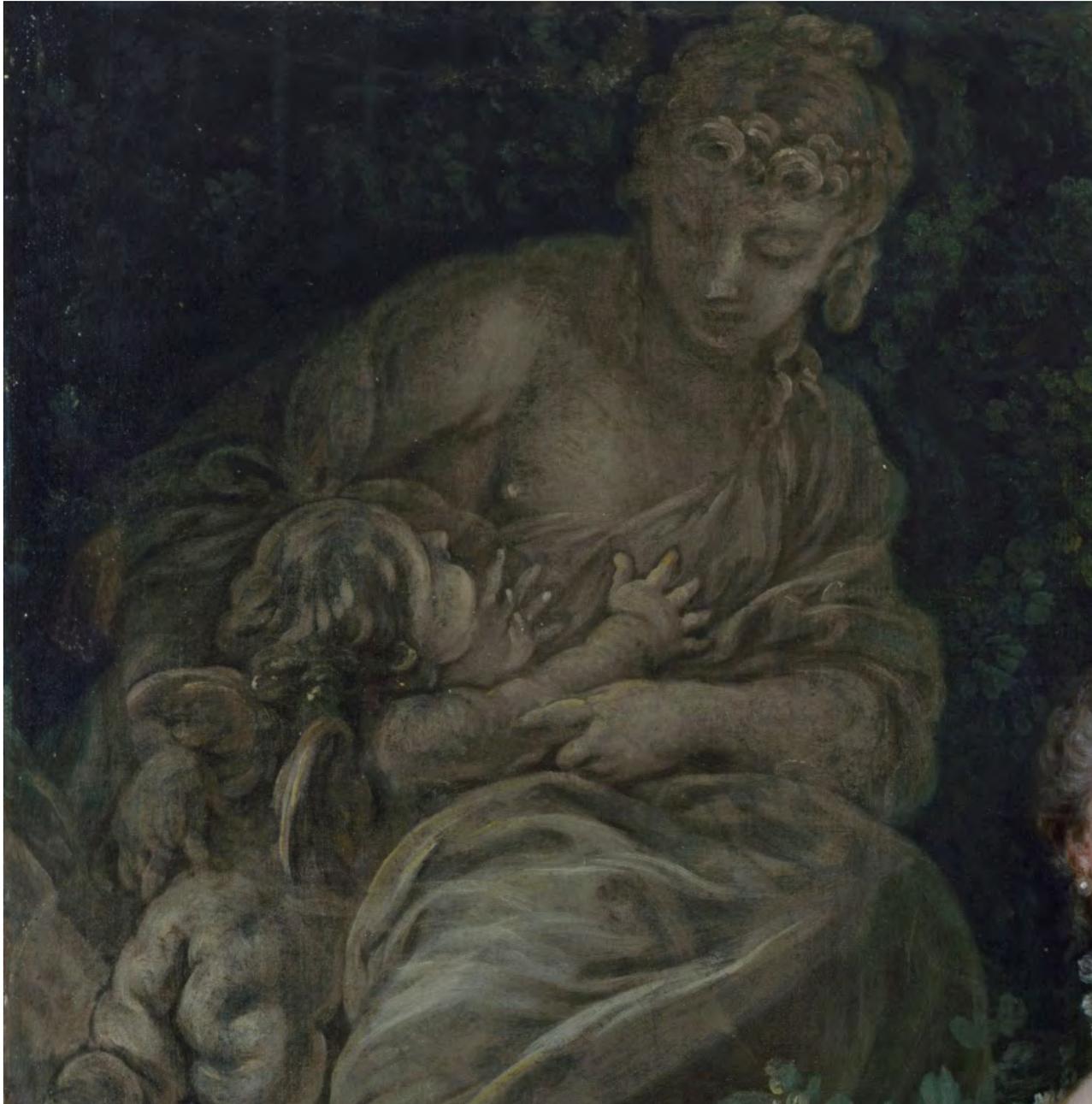
PORTRAITURE
FAME AND CELEBRITY



TITLE Madame de Pompadour
DATE 1759
SIZE 91 x 68 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST François Boucher
DATES 1703-1770
PLACE France

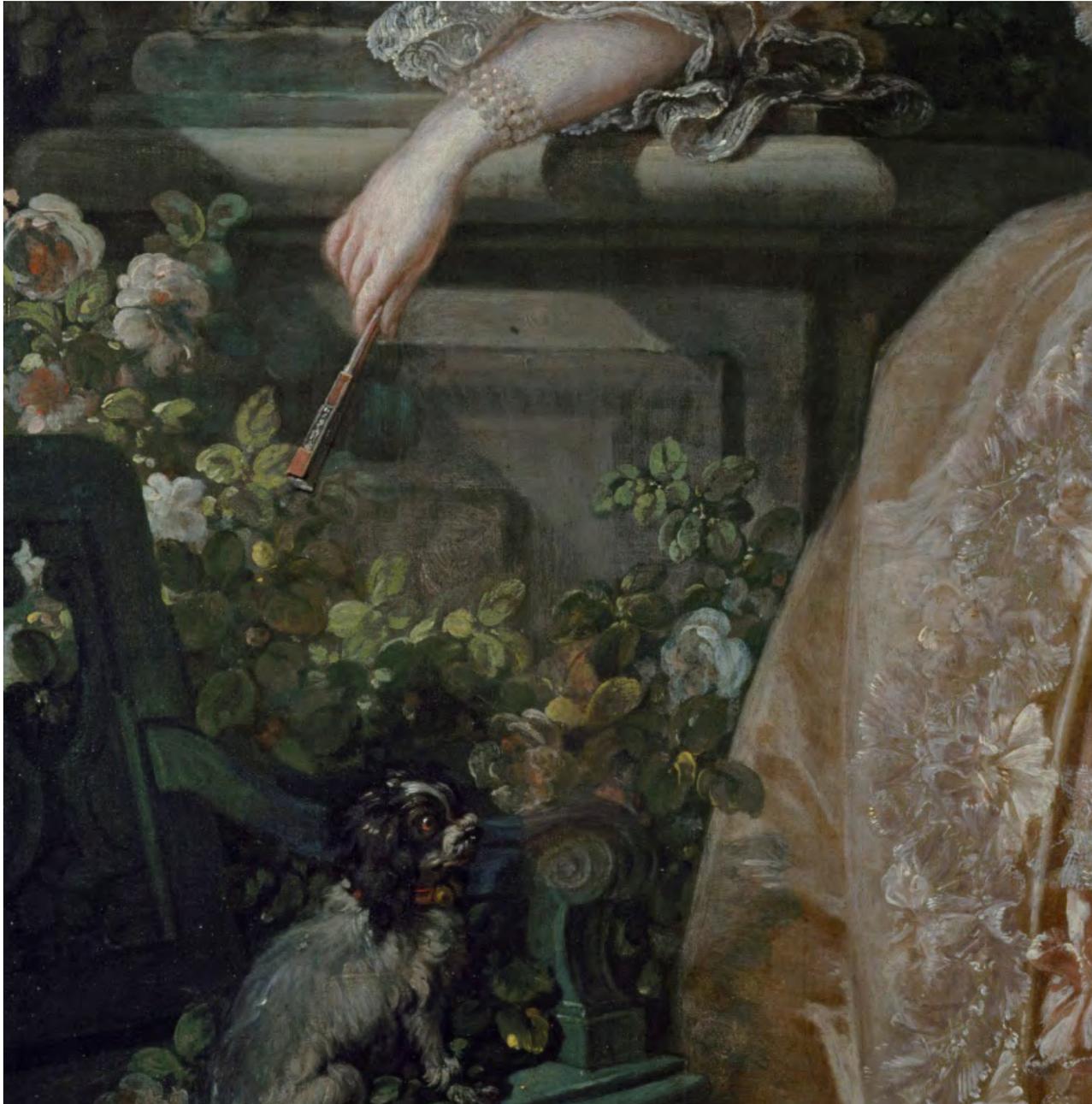
MADAME DE POMPADOUR



IN DETAIL



MADAME DE POMPADOUR



IN DETAIL



THE PORTRAIT

Madame de Pompadour, who was the official mistress of King of France Louis XV from 1745 until 1752, is shown surrounded by flowers and greenery, relaxing in a beautiful garden setting. She is wearing luxurious shell-pink clothing of the latest fashions and is resting against a plinth which supports a sculpture. Her hand holds a fan tilted downward, drawing our attention to her pet spaniel who waits beside her.

This portrait is part of a series commissioned by Madame de Pompadour in the 1750s. She engaged leading French painters to document herself and manage her image in the public sphere. Her sexual relationship with Louis XV had ended and she was now a key political advisor to the king, who appreciated her intelligence. Madame de Pompadour, a great patron of the arts, used these portrait commissions to remodel her image and construct a new identity for herself, emphasising her new position in the royal court as a key political player who maintained the confidence of the king. This position was firmly based on their prior relationship, friendship and trust.

Key symbols included in the picture further communicate her message. The dog at her feet is a symbol of fidelity. The sculpture depicted on the plinth represents an allegory of 'Friendship consoling Love', a sculpture that Madame de Pompadour had commissioned, by the artist Pigalle. The garden setting highlights her natural and honest relationship with the king. The soft pink colours are associated with both maternal devotion and romantic love.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

Madame de Pompadour was an official mistress and advisor to King Louis XV of France. She caught his eye at a masked ball in 1745 and was brought to the royal court where she remained with him until her death in 1764. Louis commissioned the Petit Trianon palace at the Palace of Versailles for her.

In 1751, when her intimate relationship with the king ended, her role changed to political confidante and she primarily focused her time on her patronage of the arts. Her interest in art stretched to production, supporting a royal porcelain factory that made beautiful dishes and other things at Sèvres, near Versailles, and also supporting the tapestry industry.

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

François Boucher (1703-1770) was a French artist. He painted in the Rococo style, characterised by a pastel colour palette with curved lines and elaborate ornamentation, often depicting allegorical works with themes of love, myths and playfulness. He was one of the most celebrated decorative artists of the 18th century and alongside his painting designed theatre sets and tapestries. Madame de Pompadour was a great fan and patron of his work. His portraits of her exemplify his style.

DISCUSS

Why might an allegorical portrait be more difficult for an artist to create?

COMPARE



- Explore the original allegorical sculpture of *Love Embracing Friendship* by Pigalle, commissioned by Madame Pompadour.



Pigalle, *L'Amour embrassant l'Amitié*,
1758

© 2013 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du
Louvre) / Michel Urtado

COMPARE

- Explore the following images of Madame Pompadour and compare them with the Wallace Collection portrait. How has her image been portrayed in these great works of art? What are the similarities and differences?

IMAGE LEFT
François-Hubert Drouais,
*Madame de Pompadour at her
Tambour Frame*, 1763–4

©The National Gallery, London

IMAGE RIGHT
François Boucher, *Madame de
Pompadour*, 1756

©Alte Pinakothek, Bayerische
Staatsgemäldesammlungen



COMPARE



- Compare the Wallace Collection portrait of Madame de Pompadour with *The Rising of the Sun* and *The Setting of the Sun* tapestry models, also in the Wallace Collection, that were commissioned by Madame de Pompadour for the Gobelins tapestry manufactory. The scenes in these images derive from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which the sun god Apollo rides his chariot across the sky each day and returns to the sea, and the nymph Tethys, at night. Madame de Pompadour was involved in the choice of the subject, casting Louis as Apollo, and herself as Tethys, welcoming him home after a hard day.
- Explore how her relationship with the king has been portrayed in these great allegorical works of art, the original tapestries of which were hung in the king's bedroom in his country retreat, château de Bellevue. Why might we consider these tapestry models to also be portraits?



François Boucher,
The Rising of the Sun,
1753

François Boucher,
The Setting of the Sun,
1752

EXPLORE FURTHER



Explore portraits of women in politics today and how they are used:

- Elizabeth Peyton, *Angela Merkel*, 2017
- John Ward Knox, *Jacinda Ardern*, 2017
- Geoff Wilson, *Diane Abbott*, 1992

LADY WALLACE

PORTRAITURE
FAME AND CELEBRITY



TITLE Bust of Lady Wallace
DATE c. 1872
SIZE 71 cm
MATERIALS Marble

ARTIST Charles Auguste Lebourg
DATES 1829-1906
PLACE France

LADY WALLACE



IN DETAIL



THE PORTRAIT

The benefactress of the Wallace Collection, Lady Wallace, is depicted in this white marble bust in classical style. Her wavy hair is swept and gathered at the back and adorned with flowers. Her curls frame her face as she gazes to the side. Her elegant neck and shoulders are bare and the frilled edge of her dress merges with drapery that wraps the sculpture and is accented with flowers at her breast. It is a portrait that we might feel fitting for a lady of such immense wealth.

This portrait, however, marks a huge moment of change in the life of Lady Wallace. In a few months in 1871 she had gone from being a woman of ordinary social status, relatively anonymous, to being the wife of an English baronet, a highly celebrated philanthropist, living amidst high society in London. This bust, commissioned by her husband in 1872, reflects her new public profile and marks this sudden transformation with the words on the plinth clearly stating that she is the newly created Lady Wallace. Her status is further illustrated by the fact that this bust was, in 1872, exhibited at the greatest art event in the Western world at the time, the Paris Salon, the official art exhibition of the Académie des Beaux-Arts.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

Lady Wallace started her life as Julie Amélie Charlotte Castelnau, a French woman born to unmarried parents in 1819. Her life was to develop from her working-class origins in France to one of great privilege in Britain.

Julie met Englishman Richard Wallace whilst working at a perfume shop. They had a son in 1840 but were not married until 1871, over thirty years later. Their lives had changed dramatically just a few months before, when Richard Wallace unexpectedly inherited great wealth including an art collection, houses and estates from the 4th Marquess of Hertford. Later in 1871, Queen Victoria rewarded Richard Wallace's philanthropy with a baronetcy, which gave Julie the title of Lady Wallace.

Sir Richard and Lady Wallace moved from Paris to England and made Hertford House, in Manchester Square, London their main residence. Lady Wallace spoke little English and was not herself an art collector. Sir Richard Wallace had considered gifting his collection to the nation during his lifetime but left all his property to his widow. She remained at Hertford House after Sir Richard's death in 1890 and died there in 1897. She personally bequeathed the Wallace Collection to the nation in what has been said to be 'the greatest gift ... that has ever been made by an individual to our country'.

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Charles-Auguste Lebourg (1829–1906) was a French sculptor whose work consists mostly of busts. His numerous works won recognition and praise at salons and fairs in the late 19th century. Many of his works can be seen in public buildings, cemeteries and parks in France.

He is most famous for designing the caryatids (a caryatid, in classical architecture, is a draped female figure used instead of a column as a support) on the 'Wallace fountains', public drinking fountains which are found all over the city of Paris and came to be a symbol of the city. The fountains are named after the art collector Sir Richard Wallace, the illegitimate son of the 4th Marquess of Hertford, husband to Lady Wallace. Sir Richard Wallace financed their construction to provide free access to clean drinking water across the city.

A Wallace fountain can be seen outside the Wallace Collection in London. The caryatids depict simplicity, kindness, sobriety and charity.

DISCUSS

Can a portrait that actively reshapes someone's public identity be trusted as representation of the sitter?

COMPARE



- Consider the similarities and differences between the portrait bust and photograph of Lady Wallace. What do they tell us about her? What might be the different functions of these two portraits?



Lady Wallace in widowhood
probably early 1890s

The Wallace Collection Archives

COMPARE



- Can a Wallace fountain be said to act as a portrait of Richard Wallace, given that it represents how he used his great wealth for the benefit of the people of Paris? What do you think the fountain says about his personality?



Sir Richard Wallace

Wallace Collection Archives



Sir Richard Wallace, 1872
L'illustration

Wallace Collection
Picture Library



Paris, Montmartre,
Fontaine Wallace

Photo: David Monniaux,
2006

EXPLORE FURTHER



Look at contemporary public commissions and consider the role that public portraiture has in creating the fame or celebrity of the sitter:

- Explore *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, by Marc Quinn, 2005, a commission for the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square, London. Consider how the artist celebrated and raised the profile of 'someone who has conquered their own circumstances, rather than someone who has conquered the outside world'.

Explore how portraiture can be used in our daily lives, on statues and money, etc. to reappraise, reframe and celebrate individuals' contributions to society.

- Look at the [portrait of Alan Turing](#) who is depicted on the current £50 note.
- What values do we choose to celebrate and why?
- How important is it that we remember the achievements of others through portraiture?

ACTIVITIES



- Explore how a chosen celebrity is depicted through portraiture. What are the similarities and differences between their social media accounts, images in the tabloid press, and any official imagery on their website/merchandise/products?
How do these various channels of visual communication shape our understanding of the celebrity?
- Create a lenticular portrait that shows two sides of a famous person's identity.
 - Print or make two different portraits each to the same scale (A4 works well).
 - Draw equally spaced vertical lines on each portrait about an inch wide.
 - Cut each portrait along the drawn lines to create vertical strips.
 - Paste alternate strips from each image next to each other on a piece of paper that is double the width of one of the portraits.
 - Paste the strips working from the left side to the right.
 - Fold the image along the edge of each strip to create a concertina effect.
 - When viewed angled to the right you will see one portrait, and when the image is moved to the left you will see the other.

EXTERNAL REFERENCES AND HYPERLINKS



Diego Velázquez
Lady in a Mantilla
c. 1646

Chatsworth House

[LINK>>](#)



François Boucher
Madame de Pompadour
1756

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[LINK>>](#)



Pigalle
L'Amour embrassant l'Amitié
1758
France

© 2013 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre)
/ Michel Urtado

[LINK>>](#)



Fontaine Wallace
Paris, Montmartre

Photo: David Monniaux, 2006

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François-Hubert Drouais
Madame de Pompadour at her Tambour Frame
1763-4

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