



# The Painter's Chair: George Washington and the Making of American Art

*Hugh Howard*

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"I am so hackneyed to the touches of the painters pencil, that I am now altogether at their beck ... no dray moves more readily to the Thill, than I do to the Painters Chair." - *George Washington, 16, 1785*

When George Washington was born, the New World had virtually no artists. Over the course of his life, a cultural transformation would occur. Virtually everyone regarded Washington as America's indispensable man, and the early painters and sculptors were no exception. Hugh Howard surveys the founding fathers of American painting through their portraits of Washington. Charles Willson Peale was the comrade-in-arms, John Trumbull the aristocrat, Benjamin West the mentor, and Gilbert Stuart the brilliant wastrel. Their images of Washington fed an immense popular appetite that has never faded, Stuart's image endures today on the \$1 bill. *The Painter's Chair* is an eloquent narrative of how America's first painters toiled to create an art worthy of the new republic, and the hero whom they turned into an icon.

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