

COLNAGHI



SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, P.R.A.
(Plymouth 1723 - 1792 London)

*PORTRAIT OF MRS MOSES FRANKS,
HALF-LENGTH, IN A WHITE DRESS
WITH A BLUE SASH*

1766

oil on canvas
75 x 63.5 cm; 29 1/2 x 25 in.

Provenance

By descent from the sitter to her daughter Isabelle, Lady Cooper (1769-1855), wife of Rev. Sir William Henry Cooper, 4th Bt;
By descent to her daughter Elizabeth, wife of Rev. Edward H. Dawkins,
By descent to her son, Edward H.F. Dawkins (1837-1912);
His sale ['A Different Property'], Christie's, London, 9 June 1888, lot 345 (as 'Sir J. Reynolds', unsold; the Reynolds portrait of [Priscilla] Mrs. Joseph Franks, of whom his mother was sole heir, also unsold, was lot 344);
Returned to Edward Dawkins and consigned by him on 23 May 1901, together with the Reynolds portraits of Moses Franks and Priscilla, Mrs. Joseph Franks, to
Thos. Agnew & Son, London (stock no. 9903);
By whom sold, together with the other Franks portraits, on the same day to Lawrie & Co., 15 Old Bond St., London;
Anonymous sale, Christie's, New York, 9 June 1978, lot 63 (as 'Sir Joshua Reynolds, PRA', \$9,350);
Private Collection, United States (acquired at the above sale).

Literature

A. Graves & W.V. Cronin, *A History of the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, London, 1899, vol. I, p. 338 (conflating the present work, unsold in 1888, and the copy sold in 1895 which by 1899 was in the collection of M.T. Martin; this copy is probably the work illustrated in vol. II, p. 512).

Thos. Agnew & Sons., *Picture Stockbook* no. 4 [1898 – 1904], pp. 184-85, no. 9903 (<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/research/research-centre/agnews-stock-books/reference-nga27119-1898-1904>; accessed 24 March 2023)

E.K. Waterhouse, *Reynolds*, London, 1941, p. 57 (mistakenly referencing the copy sold in 1928).

D. Mannings & M. Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds, A complete catalogue of his paintings*, New Haven, CT & London, 2000, vol. I, p. 206, no. 687 (listed as in the Charles P. Russell Collection at the Deerfield Academy, MA, with provenance conflated with the copy held there; the copy illus. p. 206, fig. 876).

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We are grateful to Martin Postle for his endorsement of the attribution of the present portrait to Reynolds based on first-hand inspection (11 April 2023)

The sitter for this charming portrait was the daughter of Aaron Franks, a diamond merchant who had evidently lent jewellery to the Princess of Wales (one letter notes that he had ‘lent her forty thousand pounds worth, and refused to be paid for the hire, only desiring that she would tell whose they were’). She married, on 2 July 1765, her cousin Moses Franks (1718 – 1789), the son of Jacob (1688 – 1769) and Bilhah Abigail Levy (**figs. 1-2**). Moses was born in New York, where his father was instrumental in constructing New York’s first synagogue. He went on to represent the family’s interests in England, and he had his own portrait painted by Reynolds in 1761 (**fig. 3**). He became a prominent member of London’s Ashkenazi community, and it was there that he married his cousin Phila, the sitter depicted in the present work. Phila’s grandfather, Moses Hart, was a banker who lived at Gordon House. Moses and Phila contributed to the reconstruction of the Great Synagogue in Dukes place in 1766 with a donation of £250. The Franks evidently made regular visits to Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill from their home, The Grove, in Twickenham Road.

This portrait was painted the year following the couple’s marriage. The sitter wears an informal white cross-over dress with wide sleeves, embroidered with small floral motifs, and a blue sash. According to Aileen Ribeiro, the fabric is oriental (see A. Ribeiro, *Masquerades*, New York, 1984, p. 246). Four sittings are noted on 17 March (11am), 24 March (noon), 28 March (1pm) and 2 April (noon). Reynolds notes in his ledger a payment of 35 (presumably guineas) on 22 May, and a note: ‘Frames P[ai]d’ refers to the two pictures of Mrs and Miss Priscilla Franks, evidently paid for at the same time.

This painting has at various points in its history, most recently on the occasion of the publication of the 2000 catalogue raisonné, been conflated or confused with a replica (**fig. 4**) in the collection of Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts. The copy, which was purchased from the collection of Lord Brockett, was the version that appeared at Sotheby’s on 16 July 1952 where it was purchased by Leggatt Bros. It was subsequently handled by Frost & Reed, by whom sold to Robert C. Vose, the donor to Deerfield. The copy, not by Reynolds himself, was either painted as an oval or cut down from its original rectangular shape.

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Fig. 1 (left). Gerardus Duyckinck I, *Mrs. Jacob Franks (Abigail Levy)*, c. 1735, oil on canvas, Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, AR



Fig. 2 (right). Gerardus Duyckinck I, *Mr. Jacob Franks*, c. 1735, oil on canvas, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, AR

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Fig. 3. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Moses Franks*, 1761, oil on canvas, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

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Fig. 4. Studio of Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Portrait of Mrs Moses Franks*, 1766, oil on canvas, Charles P. Russell Collection, Deerfield Academy, MA