



SOCIÉTÉ DES AMIS  
DE VERSAILLES



Help the Société des Amis de Versailles to offer to the château of Versailles  
this splendid portrait of Marie-Antoinette, Dauphine,  
painted by Joseph Siffred Duplessis around 1772-1773

This painting is the first portrait of Marie-Antoinette made on French soil, by one of the most gifted painters of his generation : Joseph Siffred Duplessis (1725-1802). It was purchased by the château de Versailles in December 2021 and the Société des Amis de Versailles offered its patronage to allow all Friends of Versailles to join this project.

## THE FIRST PORTRAIT OF MARIE-ANTOINETTE AS DAUPHINE OF FRANCE

In 1771, the artist Joseph Siffred Duplessis, nicknamed the "Van Dyck of the Ecole française", was invited to paint Marie-Antoinette on horseback, at the suggestion of Jean-Baptiste Marie Pierre, first painter of the King and director of the Royal Academy of Painting. This commission had initially been entrusted to Louis-Michel Van Loo, who died that same year and had to be replaced. The idea of an equestrian portrait died with him.

Duplessis made a preparatory sketch and the study gives the viewer a preview of the image that the painter wanted to present to posterity. Pierre de Nolhac, curator of the château de Versailles between 1892 and 1919, possessed this "first design" and said : "this study captures well this youth's feeling with an unquestionable truth on this unfinished painting".

Although the face is more flattering in the painting than in the sketch, the features have been softened, and the hairstyle is more accomplished, the proposition of Duplessis did not get the chance to please his model. Expert in resemblances, the painter captures essential features of Marie-Antoinette's physiognomy : the bulging eyes, the rounded forehead and the Austrian lip, as well as the remarkable way she holds her head, the freshness of the complexion and the powder blond hair, giving the true and young face of a sixteen year old girl, who would become the Queen of France.

This realistic treatment of the model constitutes an essential milestone in the construction of the future Queen's image and enriches the collection of portraits from the 18th century of the château de Versailles.



### **Marie-Antoinette, Dauphine (1755-1793)**

Joseph Siffred Duplessis  
Preparatory sketch  
Oil on canvas, around 1771  
H. 44,4 ; L. 33,4 cm  
© RMN-GP (Château of Versailles) / Gérard Blot

The painting comes from the preparatory sketch preserved in the château de Versailles since 1936 thanks to the donation of Pierre de Nolhac's family.

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## Help the Société des Amis de Versailles to finance the acquisition of the portrait of Marie-Antoinette, Dauphine !

Founded in 1907 to address the alarming deterioration of the château of Versailles and the two Trianons, the Société des Amis de Versailles is a non-profit organisation with more than 5,000 members worldwide today. It works with passion for the preservation and the enhancement of the château of Versailles and its Estate, recognized as a World Heritage site by UNESCO since 1979. Thanks to the invaluable support of its affiliated organisations, the *American Friends of Versailles* and the *European Friends of Versailles*, the Society extends its reach abroad as well as in France, continuing a long legacy of international collaboration at the palace.

**The acquisition represents a budget of €175,500. Please help the Société des Amis de Versailles to offer the portrait of Marie-Antoinette to the château of Versailles. Every donation counts. Thank you for your generosity !**

Individuals or companies wishing to provide support can contact us for practical terms and opportunities for a tax relief.

## HOW TO SUPPORT US ?

### **You may make a donation with tax relief :**

- French taxpayers can benefit from a tax relief of 66 % of the amount donated, up to 20 % of their annual taxable income. As soon as we receive the donation, we will send the tax receipt.
- French corporate donors can deduct 60 % of the value of their gift from corporation tax up to a maximum of €20,000 or 0.5 % of their annual turnover.

### **Tax-deductible donations are also possible for US and European taxpayers :**

- US taxpayers : tax-deductible donations can be made to the American Friends of Versailles, a 501(c)(3) charity. For further information, please email [knsmith@americanfriendsofversailles.org](mailto:knsmith@americanfriendsofversailles.org)
- European taxpayers : tax-deductible donations can be made via Transnational Giving Europe. The TGE network covers 20 countries and enables donors, both corporations and individuals, resident in one of the participating countries, to financially support non-profit organisations in other Member States, whilst benefiting directly from the tax advantages provided for in the legislation of their country of residence. For further information : [www.transnationalgiving.eu](http://www.transnationalgiving.eu)  
This scheme is available to UK tax residents through the Charities Aid Foundation. The CAF will accept your donation and send it on your behalf to France. For further information, please email [UKFriends@amisdeversailles.com](mailto:UKFriends@amisdeversailles.com)



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