

FROM
C O L O N Y
TO
N A T I O N

*An Exhibition of American Painting
Silver and Architecture
from 1650 to the War of 1812*



THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

April 21 through June 19, 1949

Jennings, Samuel (active 1789-1834)

Born probably in Philadelphia. In 1787, he ran a Drawing School in Philadelphia, did miniatures, life-size portraits and crayons. After 1789 he lived in London where he specialized in Biblical subjects which he exhibited frequently at the Royal Academy and the British Institution.

- 71 GENIUS OF AMERICA ENCOURAGING THE EMANCIPATION OF THE BLACKS At the time Jennings painted this allegory in London, Parliament was seething with debates on the question of abolition and Wilberforce was beginning his fight for the cause. It is likely that Jennings was influenced by these discussions in his choice of the subject of this picture, especially so, because he was a native of Philadelphia where not long before a Society in favor of abolition had been founded by Dr. Benjamin Rush and his friends. Undoubtedly Jennings was well acquainted with these men since most of them, like his father, were probably members of the Free Library Company. The title, Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences, which Jennings gave his picture, was general, but his main interest must have been the problem of abolition, since the liberated slaves play such an important role in the picture. On June 11, 1792, Jennings ran a notice in the *Philadelphia General Advertiser* to invite subscribers for a print done after his painting, which he described at length. Liberty is placing the catalogue of the library on a pedestal and "as an emblem of aversion to slavery, a broken chain is placed under her feet" some Negroes pay homage to Liberty, while others are "in attitude expressive of Ease and Joy."³¹ Apparently the artist was not successful with this enterprise because the print was never published. According to the Minutes on file at the Free Library Company, Jennings had planned to present the picture to the library early in 1790 and promised to finish it by the spring of 1791. Another letter confirms that the completed painting was dispatched before June, 1792. Presumably the picture has never left the library through whose generosity it now hangs for the first time in an exhibition. Signed and dated: S. Jennings pinx. 1792. 60 $\frac{1}{4}$ x73 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Ill. page 58.

Lent by *The Library Company of Philadelphia, Ridgway Library*

Jennys, J. William (active around 1800)

Was a Connecticut Valley painter about whom nothing is known except the fact that certain signed and dated pictures indicate his presence in various western New England towns in the first decade of the 19th century. Another painter member of the Jennys family was named Richard. Some portraits of the 1790s are signed William Jennys and whether he was the same person as J. William or possibly an uncle is not quite clear, but the fact that his style is somewhat less hard suggests that William may have been an older relative of J. William. The Jennys family were active in Litchfield, New Milford, Guilford, and Stonington, Conn., and further up the valley in the Massachusetts towns of Westfield, Hatfield and Deerfield.

- 72 DR. WILLIAM STODDARD WILLIAMS (1762-1829) the nephew of the founder of Williams College, was a physician who practiced in Deerfield. The picture was inherited by his great-granddaughter, Mrs. George S. Fuller, who is also the daughter-in-law of the painter, George Fuller (1822-1884). Mrs. Fuller owns Dr. Williams' account books in which he recorded in 1801: "Paid J. William Jennys for portraits of myself and wife \$24, frames \$4." 30x25 inches. Ill. page 63.

Lent by *Mrs. George S. Fuller, Deerfield, Mass.*



71 GENIUS OF AMERICA ENCOURAGING THE EMANCIPATION
OF THE BLACKS (1792) by Samuel Jennings
Lent by The Library Company of Philadelphia, Ridgway Library

which led to public happiness and private honor."³⁶ In November, 1781, the State of Maryland, probably still under the impact of Cornwallis' surrender of Oct. 19, 1781, followed Pennsylvania's example and voted a commission to Peale. As he told William Paca, Governor of Maryland, he had also included the Marquis de Lafayette and Colonel Tench Tilghman, Washington's faithful assistant and aide-de-camp, who carried the announcement of Cornwallis' surrender to the Continental Congress. In the distance there is a view of York and Gloucester with the British Army surrendering. In the middle distance there are, according to Peale, "French and American officers with Colours of their nations displayed, between them the British with their Colours cased."³⁷ Signed and dated: C. W. Peale pinxt 1786. 97x63½ inches. Ill. page 38.

Lent by the State of Maryland through the courtesy of Governor W. Preston Lane, Jr.

- 85 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790) This portrait, painted in 1787, was the last one done of Franklin, who was eighty-one years of age. Two years before, he had returned after having negotiated the peace treaty with England at the close of the Revolution. He had become president of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and, as a member of the Constitutional Convention, was performing his last great task in helping frame the Constitution and have it, as he