

104. GEORGE
WASHINGTON. JEAN-
ANTOINE HOUDON.
1788–1792 C.E. MARBLE.

JEAN-ANTOINE HOUDON



FORM

- ▶ NEOCLASSICAL
- ▶ White marble
- ▶ full of symbolism
- ▶ classicizing elements



FUNCTION

- ▶ sculpture to honor George Washington in a way that he desired



CONTEXT

- ▶ Commissioned by Thomas Jefferson to be displayed in the Virginia Capitol. Jefferson (a Francophile) got Houdon to do it. Houdon originally was going to sculpt it in France from a drawing of GW but decided to come to the US to see GW in person.



CONTEXT

- ▶ Original ideas were to depict GW in a Classical aesthetic (i.e. in a toga or portrayed as a Roman hero or god) or with an Equestrian statue. GW disliked the Classical aesthetic and insisted on being shown with contemporary attire.
- ▶ Houdon captured the duality of GW: Private citizen and public soldier.



CONTENT

- ▶ military uniform
- ▶ cane = sign of a gentleman and private citizen



CONTENT

- ▶ Under his shirt is a Bagde of the Society of Cincinnatus for officers you went back to their peacetime jobs. Cincinnatus was a Roman who was elected dictator in a time of crisis, but willing left power after it was over and returned to his farm



CONTENT

- ▶ Sword hung not held, showing he has set aside war
- ▶ Fasces with 13 rods. A fasces was a Roman symbol of power and unity. the 13 rods symbolize the 13 original colonies



CONTENT

- ▶ classicizing Contrapposto stance
- ▶ Plow behind him. Reminds us of Cincinnatus, who left power to return to farming



THEME: BLENDING CLASSICISM AND REALISM

- ▶ Classicism
 - ▶ Contrapposto
 - ▶ Use of white marble
 - ▶ Calm expression and sense of dignity
 - ▶ Symbolism of the fasces and Cincinnatus



THEME: BLENDING CLASSICISM AND REALISM

- ▶ Realism
 - ▶ Contemporary clothes
 - ▶ Based on a plaster mask of GW
 - ▶ Shows him as he was in his 50's, not idealized
 - ▶ Life sized rather than monumental
 - ▶ Just standing, not tower over us or on horseback



COMPARE WITH

- ▶ Doryphoros
- ▶ Augustus Prima Porta

