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Museum Project; Anne, Lady de la Pole by George Romney

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Anne, Lady de la Pole by George Romney, 1786
Museum of Fine Arts Boston



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George Romney was a very popular English painter during the 18th century. He traveled to Paris, Rome, Venice, and more for his work, but many of them were based in England (Kuiper). In this painting, George Romney painted Anne Templer, more commonly known as *Anne, Lady de la Pole*. She grew up living in the Stover House of Devon owned by her father, James Templer. Anne later went on to marry Sir William Pole 6th, and eventually built the Shute house together (*National Trust*).

Although Anne Templer's look appears more simple than many 18th century fashions, there are many components of her dress invisible to the eye. Her most underneath layer is her white chemise. The sleeves are referred to as Virago sleeves, sleeves puffed by ribbon above the elbow and cuff (Tortora). She most likely wore a corset, also known as a stay, over her chemise to give her the desired hourglass silhouette. Next would be a petticoat, an underskirt not meant to be seen. Petticoats function to provide the wearer warmth, volume, and modesty. Underneath the petticoat on her legs, Templer is likely wearing stockings held up by garters. Followed by stockings would be her shoes, which appear green and pointed.

The first layer visible on top of Templer's chemise is her grey, closed robe. Also known as a round robe, there is no center-front opening and the bodice and skirt are solid (Tortora). Although the back of the dress is not shown, it is likely to be a Robe à l'Anglaise which consists of a bodice with pleats sewn in place rather than draped to the floor like the Robe à la Francaise. Over her robe, she included minimal accessories. Templer is portrayed with a decorative green sash with yellow trim tied around her waist into a box, emphasizing the small waist of the hourglass silhouette. Her sleeves also have gold ribbon to create the puffs of the Virago sleeves. Finally, Templer appears to be wearing a wig because of the amount of volume in her hair.

Her dress is typical of English fashion at this point. England fashion generally utilized more neutral colors and designs whereas French fashion had extravagant colors, decorations, and design details heavily inspired by Marie Antoinette. Furthermore, her clothing shows her political leanings which was very common at the time. Most people who wore shiny silk were royalists; those who believed countries should be governed by kings and queens (Tortora). Templer was most likely born into a family of wealth, for she had access to silk and the option to simply wear what she wanted unlike workers of lower classes. Something that sets Templer's dress apart from typical fashions at the time is the lack of a fichu. A fichu is a triangular scarf worn to fill a woman's neckline for the purpose of modesty. Her shoulders are covered by her chemise and robe, which may have led her to the decision not to wear one. Overall, the depicted outfit is very typical for the geographical location and time of the painting.

As mentioned before, Anne Templer was fortunate enough to live a life where she could choose what she wore, for she most likely had access to enough resources and money. She had the freedom to show her political beliefs through the silk she wore, showing she believed countries should be led by royalty. Seeing as she is wealthy, this is not surprising. Keeping royalty in power would most allow upper classes to maintain their wealth, resources, and authority. Every small detail about Templer's dress communicates her status in society and wealth, most likely one of the lead factors when deciding what to wear during 18th century England.

References Cited

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Appendix



Anne, Lady de la Pole, by George Romney, 1786, England,
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