

Sir Joshua Reynolds who is now one of the first painters in Europe
has written a history of ^{painting} poetry, you would find great instruction
by procuring and reading it. I have often heard while I was
at Colledge the proposition advanced, that a person when he
is to write upon a subject should not consult books, This
your good sense will dictate is a false maxim, suggested only
by those persons who were too lazy to read and had acquired a
method of writing a half dozen pages of their own absurdities
and then thought themselves mighty wise in being able to write
so much from their own heads. The more you read the better.
I would advise you not to hurry yourself take it calmly to
compare and arrange your ideas upon paper leaving your thoughts
for some time open to amendments. After having as you may
think finished your piece I should think you had better delay
carrying it to the President untill the last, for often some brilliant
idea or just remark may occur which would add much
to the goodness of the performance. The subject particularly assigned
to you is a very extensive and by no means difficult one, and though
poetry and music are good in their places the superiority of painting
in the light of advantage, cannot be disputed. How should we
have preserved the memory of those patriotic men who signed the
Declaration of independence, history might inform us that such
men lived, but when their bodies one by one shall fall into the