



A Free Course on the History of Western Art

Dr Laurence Shafe

www.shafe.co.uk

- Welcome. This is one of over 200 talks on the history of Western Art. I have arranged the talks chronologically starting with cave art through to art produced in the last few years.

General References and Copyright

My talks and notes are produced with the assistance of AI systems such as Claude, Perplexity, ChatGPT, Google Gemini and Microsoft CoPilot.

They are also based on information found on public websites such as Wikipedia, Tate, National Gallery, Louvre, The Met, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Khan Academy and the Art Story.

If they use information from specific books, websites or articles these are referenced at the beginning of each talk and in the 'References' section of the relevant page. The talks that are inspired by an exhibition may use the booklets and books associated with the exhibition as a source of information.

Where possible images and information are taken from Wikipedia under an [Attribution-Share Alike Creative Commons License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

If I have forgotten to reference your work then please let me know and I will add a reference or delete the information.



Portrait of King Henry VII , Anon

12-02 BRITISH ART: 1500-1800

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE

WWW.SHAFE.CO.UK



- This is from chapter 12 on Tudor and Stuart art, and this talk is an overview of 300 years of British art starting with the Tudors in 1500. I start around 1500 as there are very few British paintings produced before this date. Also note that many religious paintings were destroyed during the period of iconoclasm from about 1533 to 1660 particularly during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI and during the Commonwealth period. Let us begin with this portrait of Henry VII by an anonymous artist...

Notes

Kings and Queens of England

Anglo-Saxon kings ending in Canute, Harold I (Harefoot) illegitimate son of Canute, Harthacanute son of Canute died aged 24 toasting the bride, last Danish king to rule England.

- Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), religious, rebuilt Westminster Abbey, left Earl Godwin and his son Harold to rule.
- Harold II (1066), no royal bloodline, elected king but William, Duke of Normandy claimed Edward had promised him the throne.

The Normans (1066 - 1154)

- William I, the Conqueror 1066 – 1087, illegitimate son of Robert the Devil, Duke of Normandy, 1085 Domesday Survey, died at Rouen after falling from his horse.
- William II, Rufus 1087 – 1100, cruel, not popular, never married, killed in New Forest by a 'stray' arrow.
- Henry I 1100 – 1135, Henry Beauclerc, well educated founded a zoo at Woodstock, gave England good laws, his daughter Matilda was made his heir.
- Stephen 1135 – 1154, Council offered Stephen the throne, grandson of William I, very weak king, barons, Scots and Welsh looted, civil war when Matilda invaded.
- Empress Matilda 1141, agreed Treaty of Westminster so that her son Henry Plantagenet would rule when Stephen died.

Plantagenets (1154 - 1399)

- Henry II 1154 – 1189, strong king, brilliant soldier, ruled most of France, created English jury system, raised new taxes, had Thomas Becket murdered 29 Dec 1170.

- Richard I the Lionheart 1189 – 1199, led his army by the age of 16, all but 6 months abroad, led Third Crusade, captured on way back, ransom nearly bankrupt country, died of an arrow wound, no children.
- John 1 1199 – 1216, John Lackland, short and fat, cruel, self-indulgent, selfish, avaricious, raised taxes, hated, Pope excommunicated him, signed Magna Carta on 15 June 1215, died from over eating.
- Henry III 1216 – 1272, became king aged 9, devoted to church, art and learning, a weak man, captured by Simon de Montfort and forced to set up 'Parlement', rebuilt Westminster Abbey in Gothic style.

Kings of England & Wales

- Edward I 1272 – 1307, Edward Longshanks, statesman, lawyer and soldier. Formed Model Parliament of Lords and Commons. Defeated the Welsh, 'Hammer of the Scots'. Created Eleanor crosses when his wife died.
- Edward II 1307 – 1327, weak and incompetent king, had many 'favourites' including Piers Gaveston. Beaten by the Scots, deposed by his wife and Mortimer and held at Berkeley Castle and murdered.
- Edward III 1327 – 1377, reigned for 50 years, started Hundred Years War starting 1338, his son the Black Prince won great victories, the Black Death (1348-1350) killed half the population.
- Richard II 1377 – 1399, son of the Black Prince, extravagant, unjust, faithless. 1381 Peasants Revolt led by Wat Tyler. Death of his first wife Anne of Bohemia unbalanced him. Deposed by Henry of Lancaster and starved at Pontefract.

The House of Lancaster (1399 - 1461)

- Henry IV 1399 – 1413, son John of Gaunt (3rd son Edward III), spent his reign fighting plots, assassination attempts and rebellions, such as by the Percy family. Owen Glendower led a Welsh uprising. Died of leprosy aged 45.
- Henry V 1413 – 1422, pious, stern and skilful soldier, put down all rebellions. Beat the French at Agincourt, married Catherine of France but died of dysentery before he could become king of France.
- Henry VI 1422 - 1461, 1470 – 1471, a gentle and retiring man who became king aged just 10 months. The Hundred Years War ended with the loss of all France except Calais. He became mentally ill so Richard Duke of York became regent and civil war broke out, the start of the Wars of the Roses.

The House of York (1461 - 1485)

- Edward IV 1461 -1470, 1471 – 1483, not popular, morals poor, had mistresses, had his rebellious brother murdered. William Caxton established first printing press. Died suddenly.
- Edward V 1483 – 1483, eldest son of Edward IV, became king aged 13, reigned for 2 months and he and his brother were murdered in the Tower on the orders of Richard Duke of Gloucester.
- Richard III 1483 – 1485, declared the princes illegitimate and himself king. Killed all who opposed him, very unpopular. Killed by Henry Richmond ending the Wars of the Roses. His body was found in a Leicester car park.

The Tudors (1485 -1603)

- Henry VII 1485 – 1509, Henry Richmond, descendent of John of Gaunt, defeated Richard at Bosworth Field. Married Elizabeth of York uniting the two houses. Skilful politician but avaricious. Playing cards invented showing Elizabeth.
- Henry VIII 1509 – 1547, Catherine of Aragon (his brother's widow and mother of Mary) annulled, Anne Boleyn (mother Elizabeth) beheaded, declared head of Church, Jane Seymour (mother Edward) died, Anne of Cleves (annulled and survived the longest), Catherine Howard (beheaded), Catherine Parr (widowed).
- Edward VI 1547 – 1553, sickly (tuberculosis), king aged 9, Duke of Somerset was protector. Cranmer wrote the Book of Common Prayer.
- Jane Grey 1554, reigned for only 9 days, executed aged 17, the best educated woman in England.
- Queen Mary I (Bloody Mary) 1553 – 1558, devout Catholic, married Philip of Spain. Protestant bishops Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer burnt at the stake.
- Queen Elizabeth I 1558 – 1603, a remarkable woman, noted for her learning and wisdom, popular, chose advisors wisely. Drake, Raleigh, Hawkins, the Cecil's, Essex and other made England respected and feared. Mary Queen of Scots executed.

The Stuarts (1603 - 1649) (1660 - 1714)

- James I 1603 – 1625, son Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley, first to rule England and Scotland, more a scholar than a soldier. 1605 Gunpowder Plot. Authorised Bible published causing Puritans to sail for America.
- Charles I 1625 – 1649, son of James and Anne of Denmark, believed he ruled by Divine Right which led to the English Civil War in 1642 and his execution on 30 Jan 1649.

Commonwealth of England, from 19 May 1649, led by Oliver Cromwell (1653-1658). Crushed the Irish and Scots, expelled the corrupt Parliament. Richard Cromwell (1658-9), not a soldier, resigned and exiled himself to France until 1680.

- Charles II 1660 – 1685, the Merry Monarch, a popular but weak king with an inept foreign policy. He had 13 mistresses including Nell Gwyn. Many illegitimate children but no heir. The Great Plague (1665) was followed by the Great Fire. The new St. Paul's cathedral was built by Sir Christopher Wren.
- James II 1685 – 1688, second son of Charles I, converted to Catholicism. Generally hated. Following the Monmouth uprising and the Bloody Assizes Parliament asked William of Orange to take the throne.
- William III 1688 - 1702 and Queen Mary II 1688 – 1694, landed unopposed in Torbay and marched to London, the 'Glorious Revolution'. James plotted to return but was defeated at the Battle of the Boyne in 1689.
- Queen Anne 1702 – 1714, 2nd daughter of James II. She had 17 pregnancies but only one child (William) survived but he died aged 11 of smallpox. Protestant aged 37 when she took the throne. Friend of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough. The Duke of Marlborough beat the Spanish and the French which led to England having a major influence. The United Kingdom of England and Scotland was formed.

The House of Hanoverians (1714 -1901)

- King George I 1714 – 1727, son of Sophia, daughter of James I's only daughter. Elector

of Hanover, arrived aged 54 speaking little English. Country governed by Sir Robert Walpole our first Prime Minister. The Jacobites attempted a failed rebellion in 1715. George I was implicated in the South Sea Bubble scandal of 1720.

- King George II 1727 – 1760, still relied on Walpole, last king to lead the army into battle. Jacobites (Bonny Prince Charlie) landed in Scotland but were routed at Culloden Moor by the Duke of Cumberland.
- King George III 1760 – 1820, a reign of elegance, Jane Austen, Byron, Shelley, Keats and Wordsworth and statesmen like Pitt and Fox and captains like Wellington and Nelson. The 1773 Boston Tea Party led to American independence on 4 July 1776. Suffered later from porphyria and became blind and insane. His son became regent in 1811.
- King George IV 1820 – 1830, a wit and buffoon, a lover of art and architecture whose private life was a mess. Married twice to Mrs Fitzherbert, a catholic, and Caroline of Brunswick. Their daughter Charlotte died in 1817.
- King William IV 1830 – 1837, the 'Sailor King'. Had 10 children with his mistress Mrs Jordan. Married Adelaide Saxe-Coburg. He hated pomp and ceremony and was loved for his lack of pretension. Abolished slavery. Reform Act passed.
- Queen Victoria 1837 – 1901, daughter Edward Duke of Kent, 4th son George III. Married Albert of Saxe-Coburg in 1840 and after his death in 1861 she retired until 1887. Longest reigning monarch. Had 9 children and 40 grand-children.

Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and The Windsors (1901 -1910) (1910 - Today)

- King Edward VII 1901 – 1910, much loved. He liked horse-racing, gambling and women. An age of elegance. Had 6 children. Married the beautiful Alexandra of Denmark had mistresses including Mrs Keppel and Lily Langtry.
- King George V 1910 – 1936, changed name to **Windsor**. Bluff, hearty man who did not expect to be king. King during WWI and the troubles in Ireland. Problems with his son the Prince of Wales and Mrs Simpson.
- King Edward VIII June 1936, very popular so when he renounced the throne to marry Mrs Simpson it could not be believed. He went to live abroad.
- King George VI 1936 – 1952, shy and nervous man with a stutter but he was sound and much loved. He and Queen Elizabeth set an example of courage and fortitude.
- Queen Elizabeth II 1952 - present day, served in the Army as a driver. She married her cousin Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and had four children, Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward.



Pietro Torrigiano (1472–1528), Henry VII, terracotta, 1509-10, V&A

Portrait of King Henry VII (1457-1485-1509), holding a Tudor Rose, wearing collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece, 1505, unknown artist, National Portrait Gallery

Portrait of King Henry VII (1457-1485-1509), holding a Tudor Rose, wearing collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece, dated 1505, by unknown artist, National Portrait Gallery
 Pietro Torrigiano (1472–1528), Henry VII, terracotta, 1509-10, V&A

How Art Helped Establish the Tudor Dynasty

- Henry VII was the first Tudor monarch and the first to use art seriously. But what was his serious purpose? What was the role and purpose of art in the Tudor period? Art was not collected and had little aesthetic purpose. Its role was to convey a particular message regarding the patron, generally their power and magnificence.
- This is the **earliest painting** in the National Portrait Gallery collection. Painted on 29 October 1505 by order of Herman Rinck, an agent for the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I. It was probably painted as part of an unsuccessful marriage proposal as Henry hoped to marry Margaret of Savoy, Maximilian's daughter, as his second wife.
- (CLICK) We know it was an accurate portrayal because we have this bust by Torrigiano. Torrigiano was described as an arrogant, swaggering man of violent temper who was more like a soldier than a sculptor. When he was young he was copying Masaccio's frescoes in the Carmine chapel with Michelangelo. According to Torrigiano, Michelangelo had a habit of making fun of the other students and one day Torrigiano got angry and broke his nose. Giorgio Vasari, Michelangelo's friend, maintained that the fight was instigated by Torrigiano because he was jealous. Michelangelo was marked for life and Torrigiano either fled Florence to avoid Lorenzo de' Medici inflicting some great punishment or he was banished. After some time fighting as a soldier he was invited to England by Henry VIII just after his father had died. He made terracotta sculptures of Henry VII, Henry VIII and John Fisher. He was also commissioned to create the tomb of Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, in 1510. Following these successes he was commissioned to produce the magnificent effigial monument for Henry VII and his queen, which still exists in the lady chapel of Westminster Abbey. He started in 1512 and it took until 1517. It has been described as 'the finest Renaissance tomb north of the Alps.'

Notes

Henry VI (1457-1509) reigned 1485-1509, above portrait by an unknown Netherlandish artist, 1505, National Portrait Gallery

- Henry beat Richard III at the battle of Bosworth Field (between Coventry and Leicester although the exact location of the battle is disputed) on 22 August 1485.
- This was the last major battle of the Wars of the Roses and the last king to win the throne on a battle field.
- Henry III, a Lancastrian, consolidated his claim by marrying Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV and niece of Richard III.
- He restored stability and carried out a number of shrewd initiatives but he was financially prudent if not greedy. Some historians claim his 'greed' was the means by which he maintained control during his later years. It meant that he had accumulated a fortune by the time Henry VIII became king.
- **His first priority was to secure his hold on the throne.** His main claim was by **right of conquest**. His grandfather Owen Tudor had been a page in the court of Henry V and may have secretly married his widow. One of their sons Edmund Tudor was Henry VII's father. His main claim was through his mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III and his mistress Katherine Swynford who he later married. He also claimed descent from Cadwaladr, in legend the last British king but the claim was weak. His marriage to Elizabeth of York strengthened his claim as she was daughter of Edward IV and niece of Richard III. She was mother of Henry VIII, grandmother of Edward IV, Mary I and Elizabeth I, great-grandmother of Lady Jane Gray and grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother of James V, Mary Queen of Scots and James VI.
- When Elizabeth died in childbirth Henry went into mourning and may have died of a broken heart six years later.

References

Tudor artefacts: <http://www.thetudorswiki.com/page/ARTIFACTS+of+the+Tudors>



British School, Henry VIII and Family, c. 1545

Left to right: 'Jane the Fool', Princess Mary, Edward VI, Henry VIII, Jane Seymour, Princess Elizabeth, Will Somers

Left to right: 'Jane the Fool', Princess Mary, Edward VI, Henry VIII, Jane Seymour, Princess Elizabeth, Will Somers

Welcome to **The Family of Henry VIII (c. 1545)**. This isn't just a painting; it's a carefully crafted piece of political propaganda designed to scream one thing: **Stability**.

The Golden Centre: A Dynastic Dream

At the heart of the canvas sits **Henry VIII**, enthroned in opulence. But look closer at the figures flanking him. While this was painted around 1545, the woman to his left is **Jane Seymour**—who had actually died in 1537.

Why include a deceased wife? Because she was the "successful" one. She gave Henry his ultimate prize: the young **Prince Edward**, seen here standing proudly by his father's knee. By painting the long-dead Jane, the artist bypasses Henry's subsequent (and more "complicated") marriages to focus on the purity of the Tudor succession.

The Outsiders Looking In

To the far left and right stand the princesses, **Mary** and **Elizabeth**. They are framed by grand arches that lead our eyes out of the palace and into the Great Garden of Whitehall.

The background is a masterclass in Tudor "branding":

The King's Beasts: Gilded heraldic statues guarding the flower beds.

Tudor Colours: The gardens are fenced in vibrant white and green.

London Landmarks: Look through the gaps to spot the Westminster Clockhouse and the Abbey, grounding this royal fantasy in the real world of 16th-century London.

The Holy Fools: Wisdom in Shadows

Perhaps the most fascinating part of this portrait isn't the royalty, but the two figures lurking in the wings.

On the far right, we see **Will Somers**, the King's favorite jester, with a monkey perched on his shoulder. On the far left is "**Jane the Fool**," a woman who served multiple Tudor queens. In the Tudor world, "fools" weren't just comedians; they were often "**natural fools**"—individuals

with learning disabilities. Far from being mere objects of ridicule, they were viewed through a lens of religious awe:

Divine Conduits: Inspired by Erasmus, many believed that because fools lacked "worldly" logic, they were closer to God and incapable of sin.

Privileged Access: Their inclusion in such a prestigious portrait proves their vital role. They were the only ones allowed to speak truth to the King when no one else dared.

The Holbein Touch

While the artist remains a mystery, the "ghost" of the great painter **Hans Holbein** haunts every brushstroke. From the intricate gold-threaded fabrics to the sharp, realistic faces, the painting captures that signature Northern Renaissance style: a mix of brutal realism and dazzling, jewel-like detail.

The Family of Henry VIII is more than a photograph of its time; it is a vision of how Henry wanted to be remembered—as a father of a golden age, flanked by his heirs and protected by the "divine" wisdom of his fools.

- **Other Paintings at Hampton Court**

- **The Family of Henry VII with St George (c 1505-9)**

The painting *The Family of Henry VII with St George* (by an unknown artist) is thought to have been a royal commission of Henry VII. Its date is presumably between the birth of the King's last child in 1505 and the death of Henry VII himself in 1509. The armour fits this date. It may have been commissioned for the royal palace at Richmond for a chapel dedicated to St George.

- **The Battle of the Spurs (after 1513)**

The Battle of the Spurs was the most heroic English moment in the 1513 campaign. A French cavalry force, which had come to succour the besieged town of Therouanne, suddenly found itself opposite the Anglo-Imperial army, the size and position of which it had misjudged. Repelled by the latter's artillery, the French turned and fled, with English and Burgundian cavalry in hot pursuit.

- **The Meeting of Henry and Maximilian (c 1520)**

The painting *The Meeting of Henry and Maximilian* depicts Henry VIII and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I as they join forces to fight France. It shows their meeting, and the victorious results of their joint campaign: the capture of two French cities, and the defeat of the French army at the Battle of the Spurs in 1513.

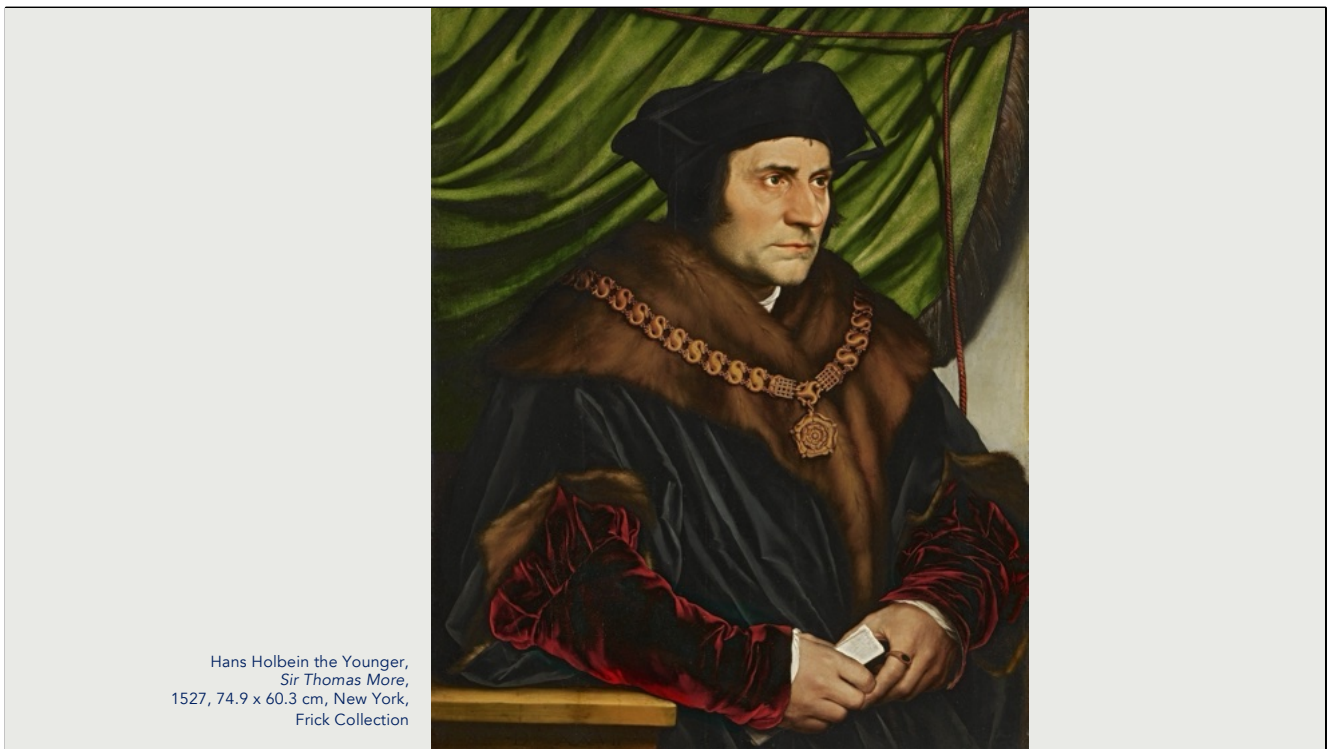
- **The Embarkation at Dover (c 1545)**

The painting *The Embarkation at Dover* shows Henry VIII's English fleet setting sail from Dover en route to the Field of the Cloth of Gold on 31 May 1520.

- **The Field of the Cloth of Gold (c 1545)**

The major theme of the painting *The Field of the Cloth of Gold* is really

'Magnificent Peace', Henry VIII's new approach after it proved too costly to go to war with France every year... not that the Field of the Cloth of Gold was a cheap affair!



Hans Holbein the Younger,
Sir Thomas More,
 1527, 74.9 x 60.3 cm, New York,
 Frick Collection

Hans Holbein the Younger, *Sir Thomas More*, 1527, 74.9 x 60.3 cm, New York, Frick Collection

The Man Behind the Martyr: Sir Thomas More (1527)

If you want to see the exact moment the Northern Renaissance met the Tudor court, look no further than Holbein's portrait of **Sir Thomas More**. This isn't just a likeness; it is a psychological deep-dive into one of history's most complex figures.

The Portrait: Velvet, Fur, and Defiance

At first glance, you are struck by the sheer **texture** of the piece. Holbein was a master of "hyper-realism" long before the term existed.

The Sitter: More looks off to the side, his expression a mix of weary wisdom and steely resolve. He isn't looking at us; he's looking at his conscience.

The Chain of Office: He wears a heavy gold "S-S" chain, a symbol of his service to Henry VIII. The clasp features a Tudor rose, and the motto *Souvent me souvien* ("Think of me often")—a haunting request given his eventual execution for treason.

The Details: Look at the stubble on his cheek, the heavy weight of the dark fur collar, and the shimmer of the red velvet sleeves. Holbein used these luxuries not just to show More's wealth, but to contrast the material world with the spiritual gravity in More's eyes.

The Background: A Left-Handed Genius in London

The story of how this painting came to be is a tale of international networking and artistic rivalry.

1. The Erasmus Connection

Holbein didn't just show up at the palace gates. He arrived in England in 1526 carrying a "golden ticket"—a letter of introduction from the great scholar **Erasmus**. More took Holbein in as a houseguest, and this portrait is the result of that intimate friendship.

2. The "Southpaw" Signature

Before settling in England, Holbein tried to find work in France, where the court painter **Jean Clouet** reigned supreme. You can actually tell a Holbein from a Clouet by looking at the shading: **Clouet (Right-handed):** Shading strokes go from top-right to bottom-left.

Holbein (Left-handed): His shading always moves from **top-left to bottom-right**. This subtle "lefty" tilt is a hallmark of his sketches.

3. From Apprentice to Icon

Holbein learned his trade from his father in Augsburg, drawing inspiration from the meticulous detail of Flemish masters like **Jan van Eyck**. By the time he painted More, he had perfected a style that combined German precision with a new, "classicizing" elegance.

Though More would eventually lose his head for refusing to acknowledge Henry VIII as the head of the Church, Holbein's portrait ensured that More's image—pious, powerful, and profoundly human—would live forever in the **Frick Collection**.



The Survivor: Madonna and Child (c. 1475)

This limestone fragment, just 48 cm high, is a haunting ghost of a lost world. Carved by a master from the Low Countries for Winchester Cathedral's **Great Screen**, it was once part of a shimmering, colorful wall of devotion. Today, it is a rare survivor found among the rubble—a lone witness to a vanished aesthetic.

The Great Obliteration

Before the Reformation, English cathedrals were "bibles in stone," overflowing with tapestries, gilded woodcarvings, and vibrant wall paintings. This changed in 1538 with a "cultural revolution" designed to wipe the national memory clean.

Systemic Destruction: It wasn't just statues. Stained glass, processional crosses, and even organs were smashed.

The Library Fires: The loss was intellectual as well as visual. At Worcester Priory, only **six** books remain from a library of 600.

A New Identity: Historians debate if the public welcomed this or were dragged into it, but the result was clear: the Reformation severed England's artistic ties to Europe.

While Europe kept its religious icons, England eventually pivoted, trading the divine for the "art of the people"—the satire of Hogarth and the grand portraits of Gainsborough. The Winchester Madonna is the "missing link" to a beautiful, decimated past.



Attributed to Isaac Oliver (1556–1617) and to Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger (1561–1636), *The Rainbow Portrait*, c. 1600–1602, 17 x 99.1 cm. Hatfield House, Hertfordshire

The Rainbow Portrait: The Ageless Icon (c. 1600–1602)

Painted when Elizabeth I was in her late sixties, the *Rainbow Portrait* is the ultimate work of political "Photoshopping." Eschewing realism for propaganda, it presents the Queen as an eternal, divinely-guided virgin.

A Cloak of Secrets

Every inch of this masterpiece, attributed to Isaac Oliver or Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, is a coded message:

The Rainbow: Elizabeth holds a colourless rainbow. The inscription *Non sine sole iris* ("No rainbow without the sun") reminds viewers that peace only exists through her "solar" wisdom.

Eyes and Ears: Her orange cloak is embroidered with human eyes and ears—a chilling reminder that the Queen sees and hears everything in her realm.

The Serpent: A jewelled snake on her arm represents wisdom, clutching a ruby heart to show her emotions are ruled by her intellect.

Celestial Symbols: Pearls and a crescent moon jewel cast her as Diana, the chaste moon goddess, and Astraea, the virgin of justice.

The Virgin's Triumph

This imagery was essential for a woman who inherited a bankrupt, divided nation in 1558. By transforming herself into a living icon, Elizabeth bypassed the "weakness" of her gender, evolving from a vulnerable young queen into a global power feared by empires. This wasn't just fashion; it was the branding of a Golden Age.

Notes (Wikipedia and other sites & books)

- **Education.** The nobility had a different education from us, Lady Elizabeth for example, was taught grammar, theology, history, rhetoric, logic, philosophy, arithmetic, literature, geometry, music and above all **languages**. By the age of eleven Elizabeth was able to speak fluently in six languages - French, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Welsh and of course English.

- Many of her closest **advisors** were similarly **schooled** and Elizabethans loved puzzles, word play, and decoding obscure references.
- **Purpose and meaning.** While Italian Renaissance artists were advancing the representation of the physical, with perspective and modelling using shadows and light, English artists were interested in the visual arts as a form of text to be read by the viewer.
 - The Renaissance historian Dame **Frances Yates** pointed out that the most complex **symbolic portraits** may all commemorate **specific events** or have been designed as part of elaborate themed entertainments. The most familiar images of Elizabeth—the **Armada, Ditchley, and Rainbow** portraits—are all associated with unique events in this way. To the extent that the contexts of other portraits have been lost to scholars, so too the keys to understanding these remarkable images as the Elizabethans understood them may be lost in time. Even those portraits that are not overtly allegorical may be full of meaning to a discerning eye. Elizabethan courtiers familiar with the **language of flowers** and the Italian **emblem books** could have read stories in the **blooms** the queen carried, the **embroidery** on her clothes, and the **design** of her jewels.

Simplified Summary of Elizabeth I

- Born 17 September 1533 at Greenwich Palace and died on 24 March 1603, aged 69, at Richmond Palace.
- She became queen on 17 November 1558 and this accession day became known as Queen's Day and was celebrated long after her death and it involved burning the Pope's image.
- She avoided wars and was careful in her spending as the country was close to bankruptcy.
- She was extremely intelligent and well educated.
- In modern terms she could be seen as beautiful when younger with a slim figure and high cheekbones.
- Her worst legacy was the way she handled Ireland.
- She had good advisors who unusually, even uniquely, worked as a team.
- She was not a religious fanatic and tried to adopt a middle ground ('I do not seek a window into men's souls').
- She used the etiquette of courtly love to manage her advisors and suitors as under this protocol she could make requests of her 'lover' that he was honour bound to obey (i.e. issue orders).
- Her advisors created and named the concept of the British Empire.
- She supported the pirates/privateers Sir Francis Drake and John Hawkins against Spain.
- She once told an envoy, 'If I follow the inclination of my nature, it is this: beggar-woman and single, far rather than queen and married'.
- In 1563 she caught smallpox and nearly died.
- Elizabeth's unmarried status inspired a cult of virginity. In poetry and portraiture, she was depicted as a virgin or a goddess or both, not as a normal woman.
- One of her mottoes was "*video et taceo*" ("I see, and say nothing"). She was

tolerant and willing to take advice from her advisors.

Elizabeth's Image

- According to Roy Strong,
 - *Fear of the wrong use and perception of the visual image dominates the Elizabethan age. The old pre-Reformation idea of images, religious ones, was that they partook of the essence of what they depicted. Any advance in technique which could reinforce that experience was embraced. That was now reversed, indeed it may account for the Elizabethans failing to take cognisance of the optical advances which created the art of the Italian Renaissance. They certainly knew about these things but, and this is central to the understanding of the Elizabethans, chose not to employ them. Instead the visual arts retreated in favour of presenting a series of signs or symbols through which the viewer was meant to pass to an understanding of the idea behind the work. In this manner **the visual arts were verbalised, turned into a form of book, a 'text' which called for reading by the onlooker.** There are no better examples of this than the quite extraordinary portraits of the queen herself, which increasingly, as the reign progressed, took on the form of collections of abstract pattern and symbols disposed in an unnaturalistic manner for the viewer to unravel, and by doing so enter into an inner vision of the idea of monarchy."*
- Images of Elizabeth took on a semi-mystical, icon-like quality—badges of Elizabeth were worn for protection; an attack on Elizabeth's picture was seen as a direct and harmful attack on her person. For example in France, under The Catholic League, Elizabeth's portrait was publicly burnt and even hung upon a gallows.
- The demand for royal images and the icon-like regard for them can be partly explained by the vacuum left after the removal of religious images from Churches as part of the Anglican Reformation. In the Elizabeth image **cult** that emerged, the **Virgin Queen** took over many of the functions and attributes of the **Virgin Mary** and many traditional religious symbols and concepts were incorporated into Royal Portraiture, such as the cherries and the thornless rose.
- Later in her reign Elizabeth, or her advisors, became extremely sensitive about the way she was portrayed. Sir Walter Raleigh, in the introduction to his *History of the World*, records how she caused all portraits of her made by unskilful "common Painters" to be cast in the fire. This no doubt refers to the action of the Privy Council in July 1596. All public officers were ordered to aid the Queen's Serjeant Painter in seeking out unseemly portraits of her which were to her "great offence".
- Themes include:
 - **Return of the Golden Age**, Geoffrey of Monmouth's 12th century *History of the Kings of Britain* was accepted as correct and Britain was founded and named by Brutus, the descendent of Aeneas who founded Rome. The Tudors are of Welsh descent and so the most ancient and descended directly from Brutus and the Trojans. The Golden Age was a period before history described in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. It was a period of peace, harmony, stability and prosperity and was followed by the Silver, Bronze, Heroic and then the present Iron age, a period of decline.
 - **Early portraits** (1558-1570) were painted for prospective suitors and for

courtiers to hang at home. Early portraits include a prayer book for piety and a rose (white, red or Tudor) for chastity. In this short period she was represented as a human being before being transformed into a goddess. There were also miniatures produced by Levina Teerlinc but most are now lost. Nicholas Hilliard (who may have been trained by Teerlinc) was appointed limner and goldsmith in 1572.

- **Empress of the Seas**, following Elizabeth's excommunication in 1570 tension increased with Spain and battles over the New World increased. A series of portraits based on imperial domination based on control of the seas. Three versions of the *Armada Portrait* of 1588.
- **The Virgin Queen**, the *Sieve Portrait* (George Gower, 1579 and more influential the Quentin Metsys version of 1583) and the *Darnley* face pattern. Purity is represented in the *Ermine Portrait* of 1585.
- **The Cult of Elizabeth**. Combined many symbols in complex ways in poetry, painting and pageantry. Courtiers all wore her portrait. The *Ditchley Portrait*, c. 1592 and the *Rainbow Portrait* of c. 1600-2.
- **The Mask of Youth**. Following Isaac Oliver's portrait unseemly portraits were sought out and burnt. All portrait from 1596 to her death in 1603 are based on Hilliard's face pattern.
- She was represented as the **Virgin Queen** who was married to the country and with its obvious association with the Virgin Mary, **Cynthia** (a Greek goddess called Diana by the Romans, a virginal goddess of the hunt and also Cynthia from Raleigh's unfinished and unpublished poem), **Belphoebe and Gloriana** (both from Edmund Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queene*, 1589 and Gloriana suggests an earlier Golden Age of peace and prosperity), **Minerva** (or Pallas Athena the virgin goddess of war who preferred peace), **Astraea** (virgin goddess of justice, innocence and purity), **Tuccia** the Vestal Virgin, **Good Queen Bess**, **Deborah** (the only female judge in the Bible and one who led a counterattack), **Judith** who beheads Holofernes, and occasionally **Pandora** (as the name means one who gives 'all the gifts') or **Flora** (Roman goddess of nature, spring and flowers).
- Symbols include the **Tudor rose** (Lancaster red and York white) and the rose was the medieval symbol for the Virgin Mary;
 - the **pelican**, one of her favourite symbols, the pelican pecked her own breast to feed her young on her blood before dying, it was also a symbol for Jesus;
 - the **phoenix**, a mythical bird that never dies and after 500 years it is consumed by fire and is reborn, a symbol of the Resurrection;
 - the **ermine**, stands for purity as legend maintained it would rather die than soil its white coat;
 - a **sieve**, symbol of virginity and purity from the vestal virgin, Tuccia who proved her purity by carrying water in a sieve, it associated England with the Roman Empire;
 - **moons and pearls**, represent Elizabeth as goddess of the moon, Cynthia (also known as Diana) who was a virgin, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote a long poem entitled 'The Ocean's Love to Cynthia';
 - an **armillary sphere** or celestial globe represented study and wisdom and the good relationship between Elizabeth and her courtiers who revolved around her like the heavens around the earth;

- **dogs** represent faithfulness and the breed associated with the Tudors was the greyhound;
- **gloves** represent elegance and they were a common gift;
- **olive branches** peace;
- And **crowns, orbs and sceptres** represent monarchy.

Elizabeth's Education.

- Elizabeth was talking in complete sentences by 18 months. Though she seems to have been by nature sensual, affectionate, and charming because of the many conspiracies against her she became cautious, secretive, and suspicious. In religion she steered a middle course and was less concerned about what men believed in their hearts as long as they conformed outwardly and acknowledged her legitimacy as Queen.
- Roger Ascham's (1515-1568) was Elizabeth's tutor in Greek and Latin and he served in the administration of Edward, Mary and Elizabeth. His most widely known and accepted educational device was the art of double translation. Roger Ascham wrote that Elizabeth developed a style that

" grows out of the subject; chaste because it is suitable, and beautiful because it is clear [...] Her ears are so well practised in discriminating all these things and her judgement is so good, that in all Greek, Latin, and English compositions there is nothing so loose on the one hand or so concise on the other which she does not immediately attend to, and either reject with disgust or receive with pleasure as the case may be."
- The daily lessons were divided into the morning lesson and the afternoon lesson. Cicero and Livy were closely studied. Ascham praised Elizabeth for her aptitude in learning languages and her retentive memory.
- Elizabeth was often considered a serious child due to her amazing capacity for and her love of learning. But she also enjoyed playing, just like other children. Her education also included non-academic subjects befitting a lady of her rank and status. These other lessons included sewing, embroidery, dancing, music, archery, riding and hunting. Roger Ascham also remarked that Elizabeth had the intelligence of a man and this held her in good stead in the years of her reign. Her handwriting was beautiful and her elegant style can be seen from examples of her signature.

Elizabeth's Appearance.

- We do not know as descriptions are biased and her portraits are flattering or iconic. However, she was said to look like her mother, Anne Boleyn, with her father's colouring. She did not fit the Elizabethan idea of beauty which was small and doll-like but with generous curves. By modern standards she might have been beautiful as she had bright red hair, a very thin figure, high cheekbones and dramatic colouring. However, after the smallpox attack that nearly killed her she was disfigured by marks on her face and neck. She may have lost all her hair and wore wigs. She was very proud of her hands and her long fingers which were not disfigured by smallpox.
- There was no Elizabethan civil service, no police force and no standing army. Propaganda was disseminated by the Church and the government ordered its parish priests to read tracts against rebellion and preach sermons condemning crime and disorder. The government also did its best to impress its subjects with its power and authority by elaborate ceremonies and the queen rewarded obedience by patronage

from titles to bishoprics and monopoly rights. Elizabeth's use of patronage was skilful and balanced power between many advisers and courtiers. Parliament was weak, it could only propose bills to Elizabeth and on average it sat for only three weeks a year.

Elizabeth and Marriage

- She was expected to marry but never did, why? Did she know she was infertile? Did Thomas Seymour put her off? She once told an envoy, 'If I follow the inclination of my nature, it is this: beggar-woman and single, far rather than queen and married'.
- She considered suitors until she was about 50. They included Philip II, King Eric XIV of Sweden, Archduke Charles of Austria, two French Valois princes Henry Duke of Anjou later his brother Francis Duke of Anjou. The Dukes of Anjou were promoted by Walsingham as he thought a English-French alliance would protect Protestant Netherlands from Spain.
- In 1563 Elizabeth nearly died of smallpox and was urged to marry to prevent civil war.
- Her last courtship was with Francis, Duke of Anjou, who was 22 years younger.
- By 1559 Elizabeth was in love with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. He was given to writing self-protecting, self-righteous letters and was a friend of Lord Burghley. His wife, Amy Robsart, was dying of breast cancer and Elizabeth wanted to marry him although by 1559 there were several foreign suitors. She died in 1560 by falling down stairs and the scandal resulting from the possibility that her husband had killed her meant that Elizabeth could never marry him. Nobility, such as William Cecil and Nicholas Throckmorton were against it and it has been suggested they arranged the 'accident'. Robert Dudley was made Earl of Leicester in 1564 and remarried in 1578. Elizabeth created scenes and hated his wife Lettice Knollys. He had married Lettice, Countess of Essex secretly and they had a son also called Robert Dudley who died when he was 3. Robert Dudley also had an illegitimate son called Robert Dudley by Douglas Sheffield an English noblewoman.

Elizabeth's Advisers

- Her advisors were critical to her success, unusually for any royal court in history her advisors tended to work together as a team rather than engage in fighting.
- **Sir William Cecil** (1520-1598), Secretary of State, in 1571 he was made Lord Burleigh, Lord Treasurer. Burleigh House (1558-87), Lincolnshire.
 - Burleigh wanted Elizabeth to marry, Walsingham was fanatical Protestant and spy master.
 - Burleigh's son was Robert Cecil, a valued adviser later, after Devereux's execution he took complete control.
 - Burleigh and Elizabeth sometimes disagreed, he pushed through Mary Queen of Scots death warrant.
- **Francis Walsingham** (c. 1532-1590) replaced William Cecil as Secretary of State. Nothing remains of his houses.
- **Thomas Gresham** (c. 1519-1579) was a stingy financier first to Edward VI, then Mary I and the equally parsimonious Elizabeth.
- Sir **Nicholas Bacon** (1510-1579) Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and his son Sir **Francis Bacon** (1561-1626), philosopher and statesman, were another father and son team who serviced Elizabeth.
- Sir Francis Knollys (c. 1511-1596) was a convinced Protestant and his daughter, Lettice

Knollys, was Elizabeth's first cousin (grandniece of Anne Boleyn). One of his daughter's sons was Robert Devereux.

Lovers/Suitors

- **Thomas Seymour**, Lord Sudeley (Jane Seymour's brother and Lord Protector Edward Seymour's brother). Catherine Parr married Thomas Seymour after Henry VIII died and Thomas compromised the young Elizabeth until Catherine sent her away. At his home, Chelsea Manor, Thomas compromised Elizabeth by getting into bed with her, stroking her buttocks and cutting her dress. He was executed for treason in 1549.
- She was infatuated with **Robert Dudley** (1532/3-1588), **Earl of Leicester** (Kenilworth Castle). His father John Dudley, 1st Duke of Northumberland was executed for treason after trying to put Lady Jane Gray on the throne. He married Amy Robsart who died falling down stairs, and Lettice Knollys. He died unexpectedly after his success during the Armada of malaria or stomach cancer.
- **Robert Devereux** (1565-1601), 2nd **Earl of Essex** son of Walter Devereux and Lettice Knollys (who later married Robert Dudley). He married Frances Walsingham, daughter of Francis Walsingham and they had three children including Robert Devereux. Vanity, reckless ambition and his failures in Ireland and his subsequent attempted *coup d'état* led to his beheading. He lived in Essex House, London, now demolished.
- Others who charmed her were Sir Christopher Hatton and Sir Walter Raleigh (who fell from favour).
- Philip II of Spain, husband of Mary I from 1554 to her death in 1558. He wished to continue the link with England and so sent Elizabeth a marriage proposal.
- Prince Eric of Sweden was prone to sending Elizabeth passionate declarations of love which amused her. He became insane later and died in prison drinking pea soup laced with arsenic.
- Charles II, Archduke of Austria, proposed by his father Ferdinand I, the Holy Roman Emperor. Negotiations lasted many years but he was a strict Catholic. Elizabeth acknowledged he was the best foreign match but vacillated. He eventually married his niece and had 15 children.
- Other suitors include, The Duke of Saxony, Adolphus, Duke of Holstein, Henry FitzAlan, 12th Earl of Arundel, Sir William Pickering, Francis, Duke of Alençon and later Anjou, Charles, Earl of Angouleme, Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, James Hamilton, Earl of Arran, Prince Frederick of Denmark, Don Carlos, son of Philip II of Spain, King Charles IX of France, Henri de Valois, Duke of Anjou, Francois de Valois, Duke of Alençon and later Anjou, Lord Darnley, Emanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy.

Nicholas Hilliard (1547–1619),
*Portrait of Henry Percy, Ninth
Earl of Northumberland*, c.
1594-1595, miniature on
parchment, 25.7 x 17.3 cm,
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Nicholas Hilliard (1547–1619), *Portrait of Henry Percy, Ninth Earl of Northumberland*, c. 1594-1595, miniature on parchment, 25.7 x 17.3 cm (slightly small than A4), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

The Wizard Earl: Henry Percy in Melancholy (c. 1594)

Nicholas Hilliard's miniature of Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland, is a high-stakes puzzle box of "secret knowledge." Known as the "Wizard Earl" for his obsession with alchemy and science, Percy commissioned this work as a manifesto of his intellectual depth.

The Fashion of Sadness

Percy lies in a cultivated garden, dressed in the Queen's colors (black and white). But this isn't just a rest; he is striking the "melancholic" pose. In Tudor times, melancholy wasn't just sadness—it was the mark of a genius.

The Humours: Associated with black bile and the planet Saturn, the melancholic was believed to possess a unique capacity for philosophy and mathematics.

Theory and Practice: Note the book by his head (intellectual study) and the gloves by his hand (manual experiment). They represent the perfect balance of a scientific mind.

Codes and Conundrums

The painting is an *impresa*—a collection of symbols meant to be decoded by the "initiated":

The Balance: A globe (hope) is balanced by a feather (affliction/pain) on a tree branch. This visual pun on the family motto *Esperance* (Hope) also references Archimedes' principles of leverage.

The Beheaded Branch: A stark political nod to his ancestors executed for treason, showing the family's precarious balance between royal favor and the chopping block.

Henry Percy was a member of the "School of Night" alongside Walter Raleigh, he used art to celebrate a world where magic, math, and mystery were one and the same.

Notes

- In order to explain what I mean by 'secret knowledge' I have **selected one** Elizabethan miniature and will spend some time analysing its many levels of meaning.

- It was **commissioned** by **Henry Percy**, the 'Wizard Earl', 9th Earl of Northumberland, a well known Elizabethan intellectual, towards the end of the Elizabethan period in 1894 or 5.
- It is unusual as it is **not a homage to Elizabeth** except that he is dressed in Elizabeth's colours—black and white. More significant is that **black is the colour of melancholy** and adopting the attitude of melancholy was a **fashion** of the period. It is unusual as the melancholic was associated with untamed, **wild nature** but here he is within a **cultivated garden**. This may be to signify that melancholic genius can be associated with rational thought and the measurement and control of nature.
- I need to explain more about the **nature of melancholy** to understand the significance of this. The ancient Greeks reduced personalities to four types melancholic (despondent), sanguine (cheerful), choleric (emotional) and phlegmatic (unemotional) and these were associated with four humours or fluids of the body, black bile, blood, yellow bile and phlegm, with the four elements, earth air, fire and water, and four planets, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars and the Moon, and a person with an excess of the humour was associated with a type of personality. So a melancholic had excess black bile and was associated with the element earth and the planet Saturn.
- It was **Aristotle** who first linked the **melancholic with genius** when he wrote '**Why is it that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry or the arts are melancholic?**' The melancholic was also associated with an interest in mathematics, measuring, numbering, counting and acquiring assets. Later writers distinguished between someone who was a melancholic because of an excess of black bile and **genial melancholy** that was associated with **genius**. If taken too far however, melancholy could lead to madness.
- In the picture there is an inconsistency in the perspective and the hedge walls do not make sense. A tree has a branch sawn off and in the distance scales balance a globe or cannonball with a feather alongside the word 'tanti'.
- This picture is an **impresa**. An impresa is a picture containing symbols and a word or short phrase that signify **some conceit** and propose some **general instruction or message** to everyone. It should not be too obscure or too simple to work out. The balance in the tree is a type of impresa although it has been suggested that it is a visual pun in which the words 'sphere' (O.F. espere) and 'feather' (penne) are pun's on the words 'hope' (espoir) and 'affliction' or 'pain' (peine). The pun is made by Rabelais (1494-1553) and links to Northumberland's family motto 'Esperance en Dieu' (Hope in God) written round a crescent moon (perhaps signified by the sphere). Also note that green is the colour of hope. The globe balanced by the feather also links to Archimedes's famous dictum 'give me a place to stand on and I will move the earth.' Archimedes was explaining the principles of the lever and it can be seen in the picture that the fulcrum point is much nearer the sphere. Note that Galileo had recently discovered the work of Archimedes and in 1586 he wrote a treatise called 'The Little Balance'.
- The word '**tanti**' is difficult to interpret. In Latin it means 'so much' referring to a trifling amount and in Italian the 'pene' (feathers) are 'tanti' in the sense of 'so many', numerous and excessive.' It could be that 'tanti' simply means 'worth so much' or 'this much I weigh'.
- There is also a **political interpretation**. The affliction could be the **beheading of both his uncle and great uncle** signified by the 'beheaded' branch on the left. This is

balanced by hope and between the sphere and the feather there are two trees referring to the two generations of ancestors dishonoured. The impresa could therefore refer to the family's precarious balance between hope and affliction or it could demonstrate his learning through its reference to a theorem of Archimedes.

- The Elizabethan's loved **secret codes** and devices and this painting can be seen as an interlocking sequence of cryptic messages.
- In William Shakespeare's *Love Labour's Lost* (1594) a 'School of Night' is mentioned which is thought to refer to a group that **met at Syon House** that included Christopher Marlowe, John Dee and Walter Raleigh. The School of Night combined esoteric and scientific studies, with hermetic and cabalistic studies. Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland's southern estates were Petworth and **Syon House**. The secret knowledge studied by Elizabethan scholars included magic, occultism, numerology, alchemy, astrology, Cabbala and Neo-Platonism. What we call science today was only gradually becoming distinct from these areas of knowledge and the distinguishing attribute was that science is based on observation and measurement of the world rather than interpretation of texts.
- The painting may relate to a poem dedicated to Percy that associates secret knowledge with 'pleasant fieldes' that are 'unaccessible' (on a mountain top as here) where 'divine science and Phylosophie' may be contemplated, as shown in this painting.
- The garden contains a **square with a square** which was associated with an architectural design called the ***ad quadratum* system** that was used by the Romans and for Hampton Court and Shakespeare's Globe theatre. It is based on various forms of interlocking squares particularly where one square is set diagonally inside another square. The diagonal of a unit square is the square root of two which the ancient Greeks knew is an irrational number, that is it cannot be written as a fraction. It was used by the Romans at Pompeii and Herculaneum.
- If we consider the design of the trees we see the tree with the 'beheaded' branch is the seventh tree, perhaps referring to the Seventh Earl who was beheaded. Opposite is the feather ('peine') and its pun 'pena' are words for 'sorrow' and 'affliction' and for 'legal penalty'. In this way Northumberland is saying the beheading was the correct legal penalty but it has left his family balanced between hope and despair.
- The figure of Northumberland on the ground could also be a subtle symbol according to Peacock. The book near the head referring to the intellectual effort associated with science and mechanics while the gloves at the other end of his body and near his hand signify the manual labour of scientific experiment and so the complete symbol signifies the balance between theory and practice in all science. The debate about whether the science of mechanics was an intellectual or manual activity was much debated in the sixteenth century as Aristotle had said the intellectual arts are nobler than the manual arts.
- The artist Hilliard was also associated with passing on secret messages through his miniatures and he may have worked with Percy to create this set of messages. Unfortunately, all of this is speculation as we do not have the key. What we do know is that secret messages and **secret knowledge** was **very important** to the Elizabethans.

Patronage

- This is arguably the most cryptic Tudor cabinet miniature. It is likely that it was commissioned by Henry Percy the Ninth Earl of Northumberland (1564-1632), a well

known Elizabethan intellectual and cultural figure. He was known as the 'Wizard Earl' because of his scientific and alchemical experiments and his large library. In 1594 Henry Percy married Dorothy Devereux sister of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex.

- His southern estates were Petworth and Syon House, the latter he acquired through his marriage to Dorothy Devereux. He was a non-Catholic but argued for Catholic toleration and tried to negotiate with James VI of Scotland to reduce Catholic persecution when he became king of England. This did not happen and Henry's second cousin and agent Thomas Percy became one of the five conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. As a result Henry Percy suspected of complicity and spent the next 17 years in the Tower of London and was financially ruined by a fine of £30,000.

Date

- The most likely date for the painting is between 1593 and 1595, probably 1594-5. According to Roy Strong the style appears to be influenced by Oliver which suggests a date later than 1593. In 1593 Henry Percy became Knight of the Garter but there is no Knight's insignia in the painting suggesting an earlier date. However, two other paintings of Cumberland and Essex do not show their Knights insignia so it appears that this was acceptable.

Description

- The painting is unusual in that it does not appear to be homage to the cult of Elizabeth except for the Earl being dressed in black and white (Elizabeth's colours). However, black is also the colour of melancholy.
- The programme for the miniature would have been specified by the Earl to show him as a student of 'deep philosophical and mathematical studies but imbued with Renaissance occultism and hermeticism.'
- It is also unusual because the conventional representation of a melancholic man such as Oliver's painting of Edward Herbert shows the melancholic in an uncultivated greenwood, beneath a tree and often beside a brook. Hilliard shows (or rather Henry Percy specified) a melancholic within a cultivated garden. This raises complex issues about whether the deep thought of the melancholic genius is a return to untamed nature (explored in the eighteenth century by Jean Jacques Rousseau) or associated with the construction of rational thought and the taming of nature. Here we have a melancholic genius associated with rational thought and the measurement and control of nature as indicated by the impresa and the cultivated garden. Roy Strong suggests the rectangular hedge is meant to be square and is a reference to the mathematical arts and one of the 'four guides to religion' of which the others are Love, Art and Magic.
- The painting of Henry Percy does not appear to link to Elizabeth although one of her representations as Astraea, the just virgin of the golden age, was associated with Saturn and Saturn is associated with melancholia.
- The elements of the painting would have been specified by Henry Percy and include:
 - Henry Percy, shown reclining in the pose of a melancholic man with a discarded book, hat and gloves. He is dressed in black and white and his shirt is in disarray.
 - A cultivated garden on the top of a hill or mountain. The garden consists of a rectangular or square of trees and clipped hedges within a rectangular or

square outer clipped hedge. An analysis based on conventional rules of perspective suggest an inner hedge parallel to an outer hedge with a vanishing point in the sky above the top of the picture. This makes the garden look as though it is tilted up or we are looking down on it from a great height. If we are looking down then the background is inconsistent, in fact there is no consistent interpretation based on the rules of perspective. This uncertainty is increased by the base of the far outer hedge becoming the inner wall of the right outer hedge and then the top of the near outer hedge. Henry Percy's toe rests on the top of the near outer hedge causing difficulties regarding the interpretation of its height. Alternatively this light brown area can be regarded as a path. The single tree in the nearest hedge has a sawn branch and there are four trees in the receding hedge and two trees beyond the far outer hedge.

- Hanging on a branch of the nearest tree in the inner right hedge is a pair of scales. Suspended from the left arm is a globe or a cannon ball balanced by a feather on the longer right arm. Near the feather is the word — 'TANTI'.

Melancholia

- The best known melancholic of this period is **Shakespeare's Hamlet** whose contemplation of alternative possible paths of action leads to madness and inaction.
- The ancient Greeks associated the four humours with the four elements and four planets and a person with an excess of the humour was associated with a type of personality. In 190AD Galen associated these types with four temperaments.

• Element	Earth	Air	Fire	Water
• Humour	Black bile	Blood	Yellow bile	Phlegm
• Planet	Saturn	Jupiter	Mars	Moon
• Personality	Despondent	Cheerful	Emotional	Unemotional
• Temperament	Melancholic	Sanguine	Choleric	Phlegmatic
- Erwin Panofsky wrote *Saturn and Melancholy* in 1964 about the emergence of melancholy as an artistic temperament. An early writer on this aspect of melancholy was Marsilio Ficino who wrote *De Vita Libri Tres* (1480) and *De Vita Sana (On a Healthy Life)*. He was the first Renaissance writer to interpret melancholy positively and link it with genius although it was Aristotle who asked 'Why is it that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry or the arts are melancholic?' Aristotle concluded that for great intellectuals it was not as a result of overheated humours but a disposition to melancholy and he cited Socrates and Plato as examples of particularly gifted sufferers. Ficino links this with Platonic ideas about different kinds of mania. As a result, in the Ficinian tradition, genial melancholy is distinguished from melancholy associated with black bile which is said to cause not prodigious aptitude but madness. The melancholic was also associated with an interest in mathematics, measuring, numbering, counting and acquiring assets.
- The most famous image of Melancholy is by Dürer. Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), *Melancholia I*, 1514, Engraving; 9 1/2 x 7 3/8 in. (24 x 18.5 cm)
 - The winged personification of melancholy is surrounded by the tools of geometry.
 - The 4 x 4 magic square, with the two middle cells of the bottom row giving the date of the engraving.
 - The truncated rhombohedron has been the subject of numerous articles

- The hourglass showing time running out
- The unbalanced scale despite lack of contained substance
- The comet and rainbow in the sky
- Mathematical knowledge is referenced by the use of the symbols: compass, geometrical solid, magic square, scale, hourglass
- There were three types of melancholy—of the imagination (artists), of the reason (philosophers) and of the spirit (theologians and saints).

Impresa

- William Camden defines in *Remaines* (pp. 366-7) an impresa as:
 - *An Impress (as the Italians call it) is a device in Picture with his Motto or Word, borne by Noble and Learned Personages, to notify some particular conceit of their own, as Emblems. . . do propound some general instruction to all. . . . There is required in an Impress . . . a correspondency of the picture, which is as the body; and the Motto, which as the soul giveth it life. That is the body must be of fair representation, and the word in some different language, witty, short and answerable thereunto; neither too obscure, nor too plain, and most commended when it is an Hemistich [a half line of verse], or parcel of a verse.*

Conclusion

- The programme for the painting would have been constructed by Northumberland possibly in discussion with Hilliard because of his experience in the French Court. Northumberland was one of the scholars of the period and cryptic messages were loved by the Elizabethans so many level of meaning would have been expected.
- We have seen the secret garden on a mountain top contains reference to Northumberland's learning, his melancholic pose and his knowledge of many classical sources both theoretically and practically. The combination of the theoretic and the practical references a new approach to learning that is the beginning of what we understand as science.
- Northumberland also possible includes references to his dishonoured family and how this has left him balanced between hope for the future and despair. We know that the balance tilted to despair as he spent years in the Tower (1605-1621) because of his cousin involved in the Gunpowder Plot and Northumberland ironically died on 5th November 1632.
 - 'Hilliard's miniatures were often linked with spy missions...Hilliard's miniatures were considered somehow appropriate...for this kind of undercover work...Sidney's sonnet devices and Hilliard's limning devices are in a way themselves —"ciphers"...Both poet and limner in developing an artifice of secrecy were —"On Her Majesty's Secret Service."'
- Unfortunately, we have lost the key and are left with tantalizing glimpses of hidden meanings.

Provenance

- 9th Earl of Northumberland; to his son Algernon, 10th Earl (1602-68); to his son Joceline, 11th Earl (1644-70); to his only child Elizabeth who married Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset (the 'Proud Duke') documented by George Vertue in 1728, to Charlotte daughter of his second wife Charlotte who married Heneage, 3rd Earl of

Aylesford in 1750, then it descended in the family of the Earls of Aylesford until sold by Christie's, London, 23-VII-1937, no. 45 to Dr. N. Beuvh, Amsterdam, then sold by Fred. Muller, 9-IV-1940, no. 66, as a portrait of Sir Philip Sidney, to Dr. M.E. Kronenberg, Rotterdam. The Rijksmuseum bought the miniature in 1981; its catalogue number is RP-T-1981-2.

Bibliography

- Adams, J., How Large Was the Globe Playhouse? *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, (Spring, 1982), pp. 93-94
- Clagett, M., The Impact of Archimedes on Medieval Science, *Isis*, Vol. 50, No. 4, Dec., 1959
- Cummings, F., Boothby, Rousseau and the Romantic Malady, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 110, No. 789 (Dec., 1968), pp. 659-667
- Downs, R., *Books that Changed the World* (New York: Signet Classic, 2004)
- Fumerton, P., "Secret" Arts: Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets, *Representations*, No. 15 (Summer, 1986), pp. 57-97
- Kuriyama, C., *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* (Cornell, Cornell University Press, 2002)
- Machamer, P., *The Cambridge Companion to Galileo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
- Peacock, J., The 'Wizard Earl' Portrayed by Hilliard and Van Dyck, *Art History*, Vol. 8, No. 2, June 1985, pp. 139-157
- Sarafianos, A., The Many Colours of Black Bile: The Melancholies of Knowing and Feeling, *Papers on Surrealism*, Issue 4, (Winter, 2005)
- Strong, R., *The English Renaissance Miniature*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983), pp. 108- 109
- Strong, R., Nicholas Hilliard's miniature of the 'Wizard Earl', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, Vol. 31(1983), No. 1, pages 54-62
- Strong, R., The Leicester House Miniatures: Robert Sidney, 1st Earl of Leicester and His Circle, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 127, No. 991 (Oct., 1985), pp. 694+696-701+703
- Strong, R., *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Pimlico, 1999), particularly Chapter II, The Courtier: Hilliard's Young Man amongst Roses
- Strong, R., *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Pimlico, 2003)
- Trattner, W., God and Expansion in Elizabethan England: John Dee, 1527-1583, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Jan., 1964), pp. 17-34
- Wells, R., John Downland and Elizabethan Melancholy, *Early Music*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Nov., 1985), pp. 514-528
- Yates, F., Chapman and Durer on Inspired Melancholy, *University of Rochester Library Bulletin*, Vol. XXXIV, 1981, pp. 1-11



Daniel Mytens (c. 1590-1647/8), *Portrait of Charles I and Henrietta Maria*, 1631, Royal Collection

Daniel Mytens (c. 1590-1647/8), *Portrait of Charles I and Henrietta Maria*, 1631, Royal Collection

- Daniel Mytens was a Dutch-born portrait painter active in early 17th-century England. Born around 1590 in The Hague, he moved to London and became a leading court artist under King Charles I. Mytens specialised in elegant, detailed portraits of aristocrats, helping to establish a refined court style before the arrival of Anthony van Dyck. His works are valued for their precision and subtle characterisation. Despite later being overshadowed, Mytens played a key role in shaping early Stuart portraiture in England.



Daniel Mytens (c. 1590-1647), *Charles I and Henrietta Maria*, c. 1630-32
95.6 x 175.3 cm, Royal Collection



Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), *Portrait of Charles I and his wife Henrietta Maria*, 1632, Kroměříž Archdiocesan Museum

Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), *Portrait of Charles I and his wife Henrietta Maria*, 1632, Kroměříž Archdiocesan Museum, Czech Republic

Daniel Mytens (c. 1590-1647), *Charles I and Henrietta Maria*, c. 1630-32, 95.6 x 175.3 cm, Royal Collection

Van Dyck: The Man Who Invented Royal Glamour

When **Anthony van Dyck** arrived at the court of **Charles I** in 1632, he didn't just paint the King—he rebranded him. Before Van Dyck, the Dutch painter **Daniel Mytens** was the court favourite, but his style was stiff, formal, and—in the words of one critic—resembled a "Punch & Judy show."

The Van Dyck "Filter"

Van Dyck brought the atmospheric drama of the Italian masters to England. He replaced Mytens' flat lighting with deep green curtains and moody skies, creating a three-dimensional world of elegance.

Most importantly, he mastered the art of "beautiful truth." While **Queen Henrietta Maria** was described by contemporaries as a small woman with "skinny arms and teeth like defence works," Van Dyck painted her as a radiant icon of grace. He pioneered the transition from the stiff Tudor ruff to the fashionable, soft lace collar—a look so synonymous with the King it became known as the "Cavalier" style.

From "Drawer" to Knight

The difference wasn't just on the canvas; it was in the artist's status. While Mytens was considered a mere "drawer," Van Dyck lived like a nobleman, sporting gold chains and silks. Charles I, a sophisticated collector of Titian and Raphael,

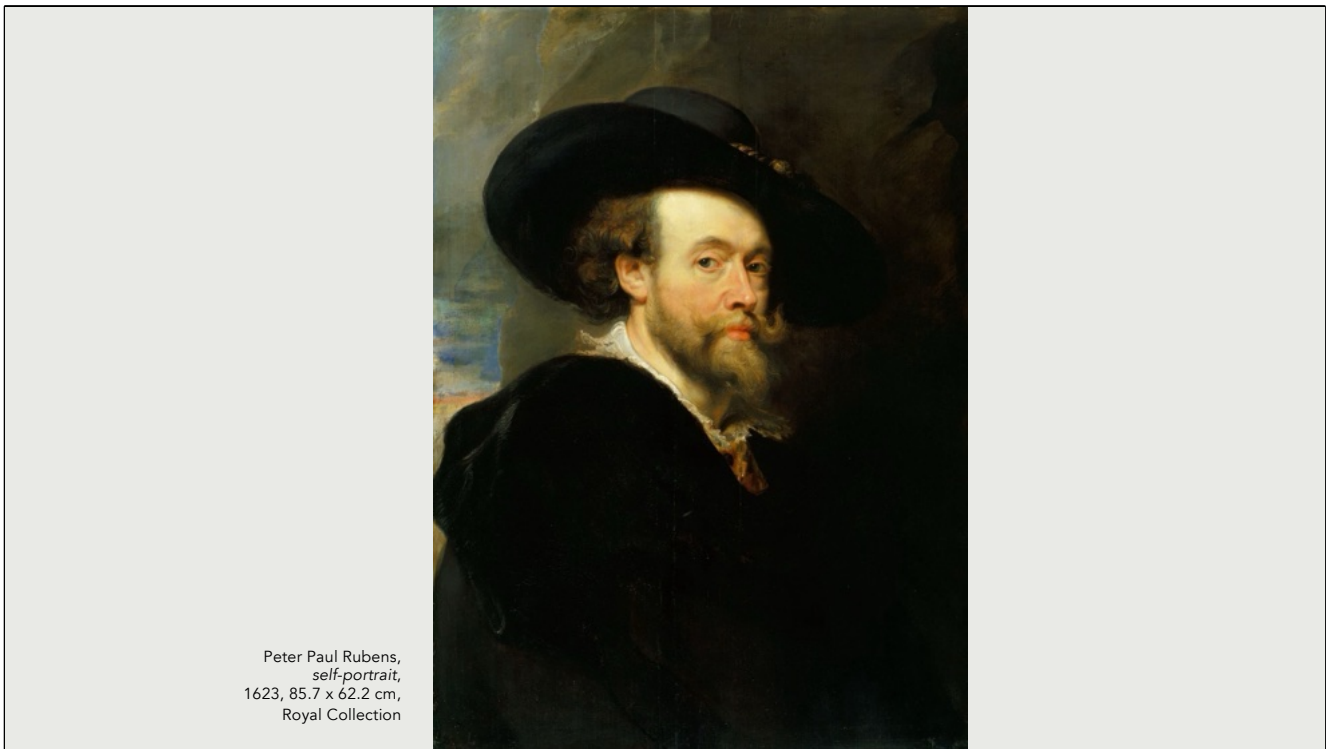
recognized a kindred spirit. He knighted Van Dyck within a year, signaling a new era where the artist was no longer a craftsman, but a vital architect of the royal image.

Notes

- Daniel Mytens [Mitjens] was first commissioned to paint a double portrait for the cabinet room but his work was deemed unsatisfactory. Van Dyck was then engaged and his version must have pleased for its emphasis on the union of the King (his sovereignty made plain by the regalia behind him) and the Queen, symbolised by the exchange to a garland of laurel, presented by the Queen to her husband and partly in allusion to her father's (Henry IV) martial fame. The olive branch held in her left hand may also refer to Charles' peace-loving father James I. There is a miniature copy of the queen's head in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam which is signed and dated 1632 and a copy in miniature by John Hoskins of the whole picture, both of which were painted for the King. There are several more copies both of the entire composition and of single figures in various collections and the work was also engraved by Van Voerst in 1634." (V&A)

References

- V&A website



Peter Paul Rubens,
self-portrait,
1623, 85.7 x 62.2 cm,
Royal Collection

Peter Paul Rubens, self-portrait, 1623, 85.7 x 62.2 cm, Royal Collection

Commissioned by Henry Danvers, Earl of Danby, as a present for Charles I when Prince of Wales

The Blushing Master: Rubens's Peace Offering (1623)

In the high-stakes world of Stuart art collecting, sending a "studio work" to the Prince of Wales was a dangerous faux pas. When **Peter Paul Rubens** accidentally sent a painting mostly finished by his assistants to the future **Charles I**, the fallout was immediate. The work was sent back as "scarcely touched by his own hand."

A Signature of Redemption

To save face, Rubens created this 1623 self-portrait—a "peace offering" crafted entirely by his own hand. While Rubens feigned modesty about sending his own likeness to a prince, the painting is a masterclass in self-promotion.

The "Rubens" Touch: Unlike his grand historical epics, this is a study in pure technique. He uses "rivers of oil paint" on the face and thin, scrubbed layers in the background to prove his personal mastery.

A Visual Pun: Look at the background. The combination of a rock (*Petrus*) and a reddening sky (*caelum rubens*) is a clever Latin play on his name: **Petrus Paullus Rubens**.

Whether he was truly "blushing" with shame or simply showing off his genius, Rubens succeeded. He transformed a diplomatic blunder into an enduring icon of the artist as a gentleman of consequence.



Inigo Jones, Banqueting House, 1619-1623

Inigo Jones, Banqueting House, 1619-1623

Inigo Jones: The Architect of Absolute Harmony (1619–1623)

Before **Inigo Jones**, English architecture was a jumble of medieval turrets and Tudor gables. Jones changed everything. After studying in Italy and falling under the spell of **Palladio**, he returned to London as a revolutionary, determined to bring the mathematical purity of the Renaissance to the Stuart court.

The Banqueting House: A Palace of Peace

When the old Banqueting House burned down in 1619, Jones saw an opportunity to create a monument to "The King of Peace." Built in a remarkably swift four years, this Whitehall masterpiece was the first truly classical building in London.

- **A Multi-Purpose Stage:** Despite its name, it was rarely used for eating. It was a theatre for royal "masques," a courtroom for judgment, and a sacred space where the King performed healing rituals.
- **The Language of Columns:** Jones used a hierarchy of classical orders to signal power. He bypassed "humble" designs, opting for elegant **Ionic** columns on the first floor and sophisticated **Composite** and **Corinthian** orders above.

A Stone Transformation

Originally, the building was a tri-colour marvel of honey and dark brown stone, topped with white **Portland stone**. Though later resurfaced entirely in white by Sir John Soane, Jones's original vision established the "Roman" look that would define British civic architecture for centuries. He didn't just build a hall; he gave the monarchy a new, indestructible identity.

Notes

Banqueting House

- It was based on a basilica design from Vitruvius with Palladian influences. The basilica was a Roman meeting hall and Jones thought this came closest to the function of a banqueting hall. Vitruvius said a basilica should be twice as long as wide which led to dimensions of 110' long by

55' wide by 55' high. The building cost £15,618 14s, a large sum that is difficult to translate into today's prices.

- Jones had plans for a star chamber that he was working on when the Old Banqueting House burned down but it was never built.
- The first masque was held on Twelfth Night 1622, it was Jones and Jonson's *Masque of Augurs* and it was performed when the building was in the final stages of completion.
- It was originally conceived as a nave but in 1624-6 the great apse was blocked off. The interior uses Ionic columns below and Corinthian for the *piano nobile* with both columns fluted.
- The side ends were never completed as can be seen below. It is believed it was intended to be part of a larger building.
- Externally it has seven bays of superimposed columns, Ionic and Composite/Ionic above. The exterior is rusticated with a marble cornice. All the blocks are chamfered creating a "V" shape between each block. It avoids the use of quoins, a normal feature of Jacobean houses. There are two half columns in the centre with almost fully rounded columns either side.
- The swags (a carved ornamental motif of stylized flowers, fruit, foliage and cloth tied with ribbons that sag in the middle) was freely used on both Greek and Roman buildings. A festoon is a swag made entirely of folds of cloth.
- Giulio Romano's Palazzo Thiene (1542, visited by Jones in 1614) also has full rustication with double pilasters at the corners.
- **Prior Banqueting Houses.** An **Elizabethan Banqueting House of 1581** was probably meant to be only a temporary structure but it continued in use for 25 years. Although the building had substantial foundations its main structure was of **timber and canvas** and so it must have become very dilapidated by **1606** when what we now call the **Old Banqueting House was started**. It was built of **brick and stone** and was completed in March **1609**. It consisted of a large hall above a ground floor basement and internally it had two stories with side galleries supported on Doric columns with Ionic columns above, supporting the roof. The Old Banqueting Hall's internal columns stood in the hall and there were complaints that they blocked the view of the masques. The court sat on tiers against the sides. The 1606 design also has links to Vitruvius, who don't know the designer but we assume it was **Simon Basil, the King's Surveyor**.
- **The Star Chamber Plan** by Inigo Jones (now in Worcester College) was a building for the law court that would have been half the size of the Banqueting Hall. It was designed in 1617 but never went ahead as the more pressing commission for the Banqueting House took precedence.
- **A pediment** was originally planned for the Banqueting House. It does have a low pitched roof but it cannot be seen from ground level. In the drawing from the masque it is not rusticated in the upper two storeys. There is a central door in the basement but not in the finished building suggesting the plans for the building may have changed. The rear facade is the same as the front. There is also a drawing of the Banqueting House by Inigo Jones from a masque drawing.
- Note that in the 16th century the term "**banqueting**" **had a different meaning**. It referred to the **period after a meal** when you had sweet wines and sweet meats (such as marzipan and quince in syrup). It only began to acquire the modern meaning in the seventeenth century. Fynes Moryson (1566-1630), an itinerate English gentleman wrote, "the English custome first to serve grosse meates on which the hunger spares not to feed and then serve dainties which invite to eate without hunger, as likewise the lounge sitting and discoursing at tables." A banquet was the second course of dainties often served in a separate location and it varied from a small, private affair, an amorous tryst with aphrodisiacal sweetmeats to a spectacular display of spiced and sweetened meats.



Inigo Jones, *The Masque of Blackness*, 1605

Inigo Jones, *The Masque of Blackness*, 1605

Inigo Jones: Master of the Magical Masque

While Inigo Jones is immortalised in stone, his most dazzling contemporary work was made of silk, light, and shadow. As the premier set designer for the Stuart Court, Jones transformed the **Masque**—a lavish blend of theatre, dance, and music—into a high-tech spectacle of royal propaganda.

The Masque of Blackness (1605)

This early Jacobean production, written by Ben Jonson at the request of **Queen Anne of Denmark**, was a bold, controversial experiment in stagecraft. The Queen and her ladies famously appeared in blackface makeup, portraying the daughters of the river god Niger seeking to be "cleansed" by the sun-like wisdom of King James I.

A Revolution in Special Effects

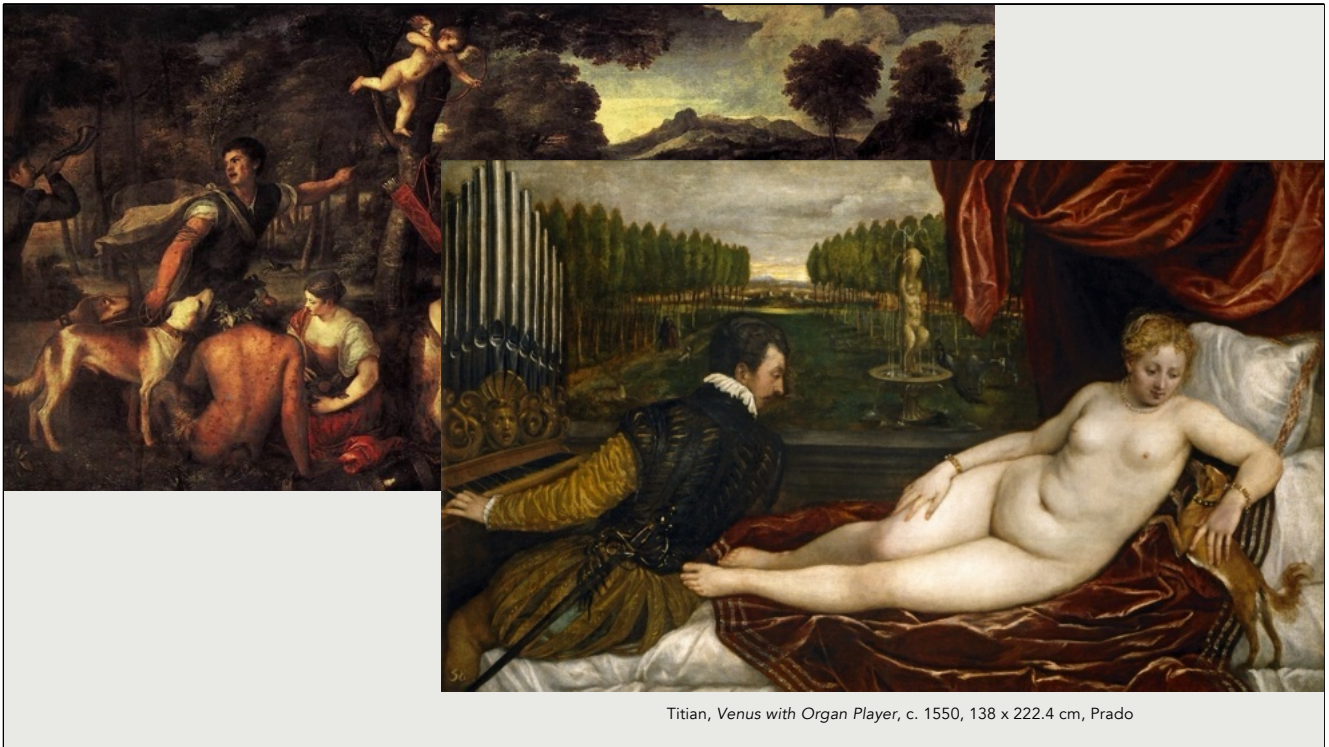
Jones didn't just build sets; he invented the modern theatre experience. He introduced the **proscenium arch** and a raised stage with hidden "wings," allowing for seamless, magical scene changes.

The Seascape: He used billowing cloths to simulate a moving ocean, where the Queen arrived in a giant, floating seashell escorted by sea monsters and gods on seahorses.

Master of Light: Witnesses were stunned by the "supernatural" brightness of his stage, achieved through an ingenious system of mirrors and coloured glass filters.

Costly Controversy

At a staggering cost of **£3,000**, the production was as expensive as it was scandalous. Critics were shocked not just by the bill, but by the "impropriety" of the Queen using body paint instead of traditional masks. Despite the stir, Jones's innovations turned the Stuart court into a world-leading centre for the performing arts, proving he was as much a wizard of the stage as he was a master of the mansion.



Titian, *Jupiter and Antiope (Pardo Venus)*, 1540-42, Louvre
 Titian, *Venus with Organ Player*, c. 1550, 138 x 222.4 cm, Prado

The Great Commonwealth Sale: Titians on the Auction Block

After the execution of Charles I, the cash-strapped Parliament staged the "sale of the century," dispersing the King's legendary art collection. It was a risky business; European monarchs were appalled by the regicide, and many feared that buying the "martyr's" goods was cursed. Yet, for savvy speculators like **Colonel John Hutchinson**, it was the ultimate flipping opportunity.

The Pardo Venus (1540–42)

Hutchinson snapped up this Titian masterpiece for **£600**. Originally a gift to Charles in 1623, the painting depicts Jupiter disguised as a satyr approaching the sleeping Antiope. Hutchinson's eye for profit was legendary; within days of offering it to the French ambassador for £4,200, he hiked the price to **£4,900** and successfully closed the deal.

Venus with Organ Player (c. 1550)

Purchased by Hutchinson for **£165**, this work is a sensory feast. While some view it as a simple erotic scene, others see a Neo-Platonic allegory where sight and hearing are the keys to divine harmony. Unlike other versions in the series, these figures have such distinct features they almost appear to be portraits.

Ultimately, the Commonwealth Sale severed Britain's link to these Renaissance treasures. The *Organ Player* was eventually bought by the Spanish crown, returning to the continent and leaving the English royal collection forever diminished.

References

- Prado website and others



Sir Peter Lely, *Barbara Villiers (1640-1709), Duchess of Cleveland as Minerva, Countess of Castlemaine*, c. 1665, 124.5 × 101.4 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

The Uncrowned Queen: Barbara Villiers as Minerva (c. 1665)

With the Restoration of **Charles II** in 1660, England swapped Puritan austerity for French-inspired decadence. Leading this new era of "public mistresses" was the notorious **Barbara Villiers**, Duchess of Cleveland. In this striking portrait by **Sir Peter Lely**, she is cast as **Minerva**, the goddess of wisdom and war—a fitting choice for a woman who navigated the treacherous battlefield of the Stuart court with iron-willed ambition.

Power, Passion, and Politics

Villiers was far more than a royal favorite; she was a political powerhouse who bore five of the King's children (all of whom were ennobled). Known for her foul temper and extravagant lifestyle, she held more sway than the actual Queen, Catherine of Braganza. While the diarist **John Evelyn** branded her "the curse of the nation," others noted her surprising kindness and sharp wit. Her conversion to Catholicism in 1663 was seen by many as a cynical move to stay close to the King, proving she was a master of the "long game."

The Mezzotint Revolution

This portrait also marks a turning point in how art reached the masses. Lely was a pioneer in using the **mezzotint**—a revolutionary printing technique invented by **Ludwig von Siegen**.

- **The "Rocker":** Using a metal tool with hundreds of tiny teeth, artists created thousands of pits in a copper plate to hold ink.
- **Half-Tones:** For the first time, prints could capture soft shadows and skin tones without harsh cross-hatching.
- By reproducing her image through mezzotints, Villiers became one of Britain's first true "celebrities," ensuring that the face of the Restoration was visible far beyond the palace walls.

Notes

- Lely painted many portraits of her.
- She was born into the aristocratic Villiers family. Her father died fighting for the Royalists in

the Civil War. He had spent so much on his regiment he left his family in straightened circumstances.

- Tall, voluptuous, with masses of brunette hair, slanting, heavy-lidded violet eyes, alabaster skin, and a sensuous, sulky mouth, Barbara Villiers was considered to be one of the most beautiful of the Royalist women, but her lack of fortune left her with reduced marriage prospects.
- In 1659 she married Roger Palmer but they separated in 1662 and it is believed he fathered none of her children. They remained married for the rest of his lifetime.
- She became Charles II's mistress in 1660. She was made baroness Nonsuch in 1670 as she was the owner of Nonsuch Palace despite the fact that she demolished the palace and sold the materials.
- While the **King had taken other mistresses**, the most notable being the actress **Nell Gwynne**, **Barbara took other lovers too**, including the acrobat Jacob Hall and her second cousin John Churchill.
- As the result of the **1673 Test Act**, which essentially banned Catholics from holding office, Barbara lost her position as Lady of the Bedchamber, and **the King cast her aside** completely from her position as a mistress, taking **Louise de Kéroualle** as his newest "favourite" royal mistress. The King advised Barbara to live quietly and cause no scandal, in which case he "cared not whom she loved".
- She had **many descendants including Lady Diana Spencer**, the Mitford sisters, **Bertrand Russell**, **Sir Anthony Eden** (Prime Minister 1955-57) and Serena Armstrong-Jones.
- *Minerva* was the Roman goddess of wisdom and sponsor of arts, trade, and strategy. She is often shown on Roman coins wearing a helmet and a full length dress and holding a spear in her left hand with a shield at her feet.



Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *King James II*, 1684, 238.2 x 147.7 cm, National Portrait Gallery

The Last Catholic King: James II by Godfrey Kneller (1684)

As the hedonistic era of Charles II came to an abrupt end, the British throne passed to his brother, **James II**. This 1684 portrait by **Godfrey Kneller** captures a monarch on the precipice of disaster. James was a man of firm convictions and even firmer Catholic faith—a combination that would soon cost him his crown.

The Rise of Sir Godfrey Kneller

By the time this portrait was painted, the German-born **Godfrey Kneller** had emerged as the undisputed successor to Lely and Van Dyck. Kneller was the ultimate "production line" genius; he eventually ran a studio so efficient it could churn out dozens of high-quality portraits a year.

- **The Royal Artist:** Kneller holds the incredible record of painting ten successive British monarchs.
- **Scientific Precision:** Having studied under Rembrandt's pupils in Amsterdam and mastered the Italian style in Rome, Kneller brought a crisp, dignified realism to the Stuart court. He didn't just paint faces; he painted the *authority* of the state.

The Glorious Revolution and the "Pretenders"

James II's reign was a short, turbulent three years. His attempt to re-establish Catholicism in a Protestant nation reached a breaking point in 1688 when the birth of a Catholic heir sparked the **Glorious Revolution**.

- **The Flight:** Fearing the same fate as his father (Charles I), James fled to France, an act Parliament legally interpreted as abdication. He was replaced by his Protestant daughter, **Mary II**, and her husband, **William**

of Orange.

- **The Jacobite Legacy:** After his final defeat at the **Battle of the Boyne** in 1690, James lived out his life in exile as a guest of Louis XIV. His departure gave birth to the "Jacobite" cause, led by his son, the "Old Pretender," and his grandson, the legendary **Bonnie Prince Charlie**.
- Kneller's portrait remains a haunting "before" snapshot—showing a king at the height of his visual power, unaware that the world he represented was about to vanish forever.

Notes

James II

- After Richard Cromwell's resignation as Lord Protector in 1659 and the subsequent collapse of the Commonwealth in 1660, Charles II was restored to the English throne. Although James was the heir presumptive, it seemed unlikely that he would inherit the Crown, as Charles was still a young man capable of fathering children.
- On 31 December 1660, following his brother's restoration, James was created **Duke of Albany in Scotland**, to go along with his English title, **Duke of York**. Upon his return to England, James prompted an **immediate controversy** by announcing his **engagement to Anne Hyde**, the daughter of Charles' chief minister, Edward Hyde. In 1659, while trying to seduce her, James promised he would marry Anne. Anne became **pregnant in 1660**, but following the Restoration and James's return to power, no one at the royal court **expected a prince to marry a commoner**, no matter what he had pledged beforehand. Although nearly everyone, including Anne's father, urged the two **not to marry**, the couple **married secretly**, then went through an official marriage ceremony on 3 September 1660 in London. Their first child, Charles, was born less than **two months later**, but **died** in infancy, as did five further sons and daughters. Only **two daughters survived: Mary** (born 1662) and **Anne** (born 1665). Samuel Pepys wrote that James was **fond of his children** and his role as a father, and played with them "like an ordinary private father of a child", a contrast to the distant parenting common to royals at the time.
- James's wife, **Mary of Modena**, was devoted to him and influenced many of his decisions. Even so, he kept a variety of **mistresses**, including **Arabella Churchill** and **Catherine Sedley**.
- Mary of Modena is primarily remembered for the controversial **birth of James Francis Edward**, her only surviving son. It was widely rumoured that he was a "changeling", brought into the birth-chamber **in a warming-pan**, in order to perpetuate her husband's Catholic Stuart dynasty. Although the accusation was **entirely false**, and the subsequent Privy Council investigation only reaffirmed this, James Francis Edward's birth was a contributing factor to the "Glorious Revolution", the revolution which deposed James II and VII and replaced him with his Protestant eldest daughter from his first marriage to Anne Hyde, (1637–1671), Lady Mary, (later Queen Mary II). She and her husband, William III, Prince of Orange-Nassau, would reign jointly on the English Throne as "William and Mary". She was exiled to France and became the "Queen over the water"—as the "Jacobites", (followers of James II and VII, Stuart dynasty claims, and generally Roman Catholics) called Mary — lived with her husband

and children in the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, provided by King Louis XIV of France ("The Sun King"). Mary was popular among Louis XIV's courtiers; however, James was considered a bore.



Christopher Wren and William Talman, Hampton Court, south facade

Christopher Wren and William Talman, Hampton Court, south facade

The English Baroque: Wren's Transformation of Hampton Court

When **William III** and **Mary II** took the throne in 1689, they found the sprawling Tudor palace of Hampton Court hopelessly outdated. They turned to the titan of English architecture, **Sir Christopher Wren**, to bring the "Modern" (Baroque) style to the Thames.

A Clash of Visions

Wren's initial dream was radical: he wanted to demolish almost everything Henry VIII had built, sparing only the Great Hall. However, a lack of time and money forced a compromise. Wren focused his genius on the **South and East facades**, creating the grand, symmetrical brick and stone exterior that defines the palace today.

The project was fraught with drama:

- **The Collapse:** In 1689, haste and poor mortar caused a section of the south range to cave in, killing two workmen.
- **The Rivalry:** After Queen Mary's death in 1694, work stalled. When it resumed, William III bypassed Wren for his deputy, **William Talman**, who promised to finish the King's Apartments for a lower price.

Christopher Wren: The Master of Geometry

Wren was more than an architect; he was a scientist, an astronomer, and a founding member of the **Royal Society**. This scientific precision is visible in the Baroque facades of Hampton Court. He used the "English Baroque" style—a more restrained, intellectual version of the flamboyant French and Italian styles—characterised by heavy masonry, classical columns, and rhythmic window patterns.

A Palace of the Senses

Inside, the palace became a showcase for the finest craftsmen of the age:

- **Grinling Gibbons:** Carved mind-bogglingly intricate wooden mouldings and fireplaces.
- **Antonio Verrio:** Painted sprawling, triumphant ceilings that celebrated the monarchy.
- **Jean Tijou:** Created the famous gilded wrought-iron screens that still guard the gardens.

Tragically, William III never truly got to enjoy his **£131,000** masterpiece. In 1702, his horse stumbled on a molehill in Hampton Court Park; the King died from the resulting complications, leaving behind a palace that remains a beautiful, schizophrenic mix of Tudor red-brick and Baroque grandeur.



William Hogarth (1697-1764),
The Painter and his Pug,
 1745, Tate Britain

William Hogarth (1697-1764), *The Painter and his Pug*, 1745, Tate Britain

William Hogarth: The Rebel with a Pug (1745)

William Hogarth wasn't just a painter; he was a social crusader with a sharp wit and a sharper engraving tool. His 1745 self-portrait, *The Painter and his Pug*, perfectly captures his defiant spirit. By placing his own image on a canvas-within-a-canvas alongside his beloved dog, Trump, Hogarth signals that he is a "British bulldog"—tenacious, grounded, and unimpressed by high-society pretension.

From Debtor's Prison to Artistic Fame

Hogarth's childhood was scarred by his father's five-year imprisonment for debt, a humiliation that fueled his lifelong drive for justice and financial independence. He began as a silversmith's apprentice before reinventing himself as a pioneering engraver and painter.

The Invention of "Moral Histories"

Hogarth created a brand-new genre: the "modern moral subject." These were cinematic series of paintings and prints that told cautionary tales of London life:

- **A Harlot's Progress (1732):** His first major hit, tracing a woman's tragic descent.
- **A Rake's Progress (1735):** The male counterpart, showing a young man's spiral into drinking and debt.
- **Marriage à la Mode (1743):** His masterpiece, a savage satire on the loveless, money-driven marriages of the upper classes.

The Analysis of Beauty

Hogarth was a fierce individualist who frequently brawled with contemporaries and politicians like John Wilkes. In 1753, he published *The Analysis of Beauty*, codified his aesthetic theories—most notably his "Line of Beauty," an S-shaped curve he believed was the basis of all grace. By turning his art into "theatre on canvas," Hogarth ensured that the grit and greed of 18th-century London would never be forgotten.

Notes

- Britain had relative **freedom of the press**. Victims were more likely to bribe the publisher not to print than go to the courts and technological developments resulted in a switch from textual to visual satire. The coffee house and the club fostered a satirical, debating society and physiognomy provided a pseudo-scientific basis for revealing the mind through the face.
- Important precursors are found in the work of Thomas Patch, who painted caricatures, and James Sayer(s) (1748-1823), a caricaturist but **William Hogarth** (1697–1762) is the most significant early satirist. He satirised social institutions, such as arranged marriage, as in *Marriage à-la-mode* (1743–5), and these often became prints that were widely circulated.
 - Hogarth hit on a **new idea**: "**painting and engraving modern moral subjects** ... to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer; my picture was my stage"
 - He drew on the moralizing tradition of **Dutch genre painting**.
 - Hogarth married Jane Thornhill in 1729, daughter of Sir James Thornhill. They had no children.
 - *A Harlot's Progress*, 1731
 - *A Rake's Progress*, 1735
 - *Industry and Idleness*, 1747
 - *The Gate of Calais*, 1748, Tate
 - *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, 1751
 - *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*, 1751
 - Portraits, *David Garrick*, *Captain Coram*, *The Shrimp Girl*
 - *Marriage à-la-mode*
 - *The Analysis of Beauty*, 1753
- At the end of the 18th century and the first two decades of the 19th century, **James Gillray** (1756/7–1815), **Thomas Rowlandson** (1756–1827), and **George Cruikshank** (1792–1878) established a tradition of visceral political and social visual satire in Britain that continues to this day.
- Hogarth was born in London, the son of an unsuccessful schoolmaster and writer from Westmoreland. After apprenticeship to a goldsmith, he began to produce his own engraved designs in about 1710. He later took up oil painting, starting with small portrait groups called **conversation pieces**. He went on to create a series of paintings satirising contemporary customs, but based on earlier Italian prints, of which the first was 'The Harlot's Progress' (1731), and perhaps the most famous 'The Rake's Progress'. His engravings were so plagiarised that he lobbied for the Copyright Act of 1735 as protection for writers and artists.
- During the 1730s Hogarth also developed into an original painter of life-sized portraits, and created the first of several history paintings in the grand manner.



William Hogarth (1697–1764), *The Lady's Last Stake*, c. 1759, 91.44 × 105.41 cm, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, New York State, **detail, reversed**



Thomas Gainsborough,
Ann Ford (Later Mrs Philip Thicknesse),
1760, 196.9 × 134.6,
Cincinnati Art Museum

Thomas Gainsborough, *Ann Ford (Later Mrs Philip Thicknesse)*, 1760, 196.9 x 134.6, Cincinnati Art Museum

William Hogarth (1697–1764), *The Lady's Last Stake*, c. 1759, 91.44 × 105.41 cm, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, New York State

The Scandalous Muse: Ann Ford and the "Masculine Freedom" (1760)

Thomas Gainsborough's portrait of **Ann Ford** is a masterpiece of 18th-century rebellion. Ford was a celebrated musician who famously defied her father—who had her arrested twice to stop her from performing—to become a public star.

A Pose of Defiance

Gainsborough captures Ford in a way that would have made 1760s society gasp. Every element of the composition pushes the boundaries of "proper" feminine conduct:

- **The Instrument:** She holds a **viola da gamba**, an instrument then considered strictly "masculine" because of how it was held between the legs.
- **The Legs:** Ford is shown with her **legs crossed**, a posture a contemporary conduct book described as "masculine freedom"—utterly improper for a lady of standing.
- **The Scandal:** Having famously rejected an offer to become the Earl of Jersey's mistress for £800 a year, her "bravado" was the talk of every tea table in England.

The Link to Hogarth: The Lady's Last Stake

Gainsborough's daring composition didn't emerge from a vacuum; it draws directly from **William Hogarth's** *The Lady's Last Stake* (c. 1759). In Hogarth's painting, a woman contemplates surrendering her virtue to an officer to pay off her gambling debts.

Gainsborough echoes the **tilted, casual pose** of Hogarth's protagonist, but strips away the moralising "danger." Where Hogarth's lady is in a moment of moral crisis, Gainsborough's Ann Ford is in a moment of professional triumph. She eventually married Philip Thicknesse and survived the French Revolution's "Reign of Terror" by proving she could earn her own living as a musician—a testament to the independence Gainsborough so boldly painted.



The Exhibition of the Royal Academy at Somerset House, 1787.

Engraving of 'The Exhibition of the Royal Academy 1787'

The Royal Academy: Art as a Blood Sport

Founded in 1768, the **Royal Academy (RA)** transformed British art from a private hobby of the elite into a high-stakes public spectacle. The annual **Summer Exhibition** at Somerset House became the "event of the season," where masterpieces and reputations were made—or destroyed—by the "Hanging Committee."

The Battle for "The Line"

Inside the Great Room, paintings were packed frame-to-frame, from the floor to the soaring ceiling. In this visual chaos, position was everything:

- **"On the Line"**: The holy grail of placement. The bottom edge was set eight feet from the floor—eye level for the milling crowds. This prime real estate was reserved for massive "swagger" portraits and grand history paintings.
- **"Skied"**: The ultimate insult. Smaller works or those by lesser artists were hung so high they were impossible to appreciate, literally "skied" out of sight.

Rivalries and Six-Footers

The competition was so fierce it dictated the very size of British art. **John Constable** began painting his famous "six-footers" specifically to ensure his landscapes were large enough to command a spot "on the line."

Even the greats weren't safe. **Thomas Gainsborough**, a founding member, famously stormed out in 1784 after his royal portraits were skied. He moved his works to his home at **Schomberg House**, Pall Mall—a colorful neighborhood that also housed a high-class brothel and a "Temple of Health" featuring a £50-a-night "celestial bed" designed to cure infertility.

A Society Catwalk

The Summer Exhibition was as much about seeing as being seen. With the **Prince of Wales** and **Sir Joshua Reynolds** (the RA's first President) leading the crowds, the exhibition cemented art's place at the heart of British social and political life. By 1821, with over 1,000 pictures vying for attention, the RA had successfully turned art into a national obsession.



Johann Zoffany
(1733-1810),
The Sharp Family,
1779-81, National
Portrait Gallery

Johann Zoffany (1733-1810), *The Family of William Sharp: Musical Party on the Thames*, 1779-81, 115.6 x 125.7 cm, National Portrait Gallery

Johann Zoffany: Maestro of the Conversation Piece

If the "swagger portrait" was about raw power, the **Conversation Piece** was about connection. **Johann Zoffany**, a German-born virtuoso who moved to London in 1760, became the undisputed master of this genre. Encouraged by the great actor David Garrick and later George III, Zoffany captured the Enlightenment elite not as cold statues, but as living, breathing families engaged in "genteel" activity.

What is a "Conversation Piece"?

The term evolved from the Italian *sacra conversazione* (religious groups of saints). By the 18th century, it described a small-scale group portrait—usually a family or a circle of friends—shown in a domestic or outdoor setting.

- **Social "Sticky Note":** These paintings were designed to be "conversation starters" themselves, showcasing the sitters' taste, hobbies, and harmony.
- **Informal Elegance:** Unlike the massive canvases at the Royal Academy, these were intimate and detailed, often featuring musical instruments, pets, or scientific tools.

The Sharp Family: A Symphony on the Thames (1779–81)

Zoffany's masterpiece, *The Family of William Sharp*, commemorates the extraordinary musical concerts the family held aboard their sailing barge, *Apollo*, at Fulham.

This wasn't just a quick snapshot; Zoffany painted each family member individually over the course of a year. The result is a vibrant catalog of the Sharp

family's talents:

- **The Surgeon:** William Sharp (surgeon to the King) stands at the tiller in his Windsor uniform, his French horns resting nearby.
- **The Abolitionist: Granville Sharp**, the famous philanthropist and slavery abolitionist, is seen holding his flageolets.
- **The Orchestra:** James Sharp (an engineer) holds a serpent, while their sisters manage the piano and theorbo.

Zoffany's Global Journey

Zoffany was a founding member of the Royal Academy, but his career was as restless as his art. After finding fame in London, he traveled to Florence, Vienna, and even spent six years in India (1783–89), painting the British colonial elite. Though his popularity eventually dipped as tastes shifted, his ability to weave complex family dynamics into a single, harmonious scene remains unmatched in British art history.

Notes

National Gallery website

- Zoffany was the leading exponent of the Conversation Piece in England in the later 18th century. He worked in London from 1760, and received encouragement from the actor David Garrick. He gained popularity for his carefully painted theatrical scenes and conversation pieces, one of which includes Queen Charlotte and her children.
- Zoffany was born near Frankfurt am Main and trained by Martin Speer in Regensburg, where his father was employed as a court architect and cabinet maker. He visited Rome in 1750 and was influenced by Mengs while studying with Agostino Masucci. He moved to London in 1760, and first exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1762, becoming a member of the Royal Academy in 1769. He was then active in Florence and Vienna. His work declined in popularity after his return to England in 1779 and from 1783 to 1789 he worked in India. He exhibited at the academy for the last time in 1800.

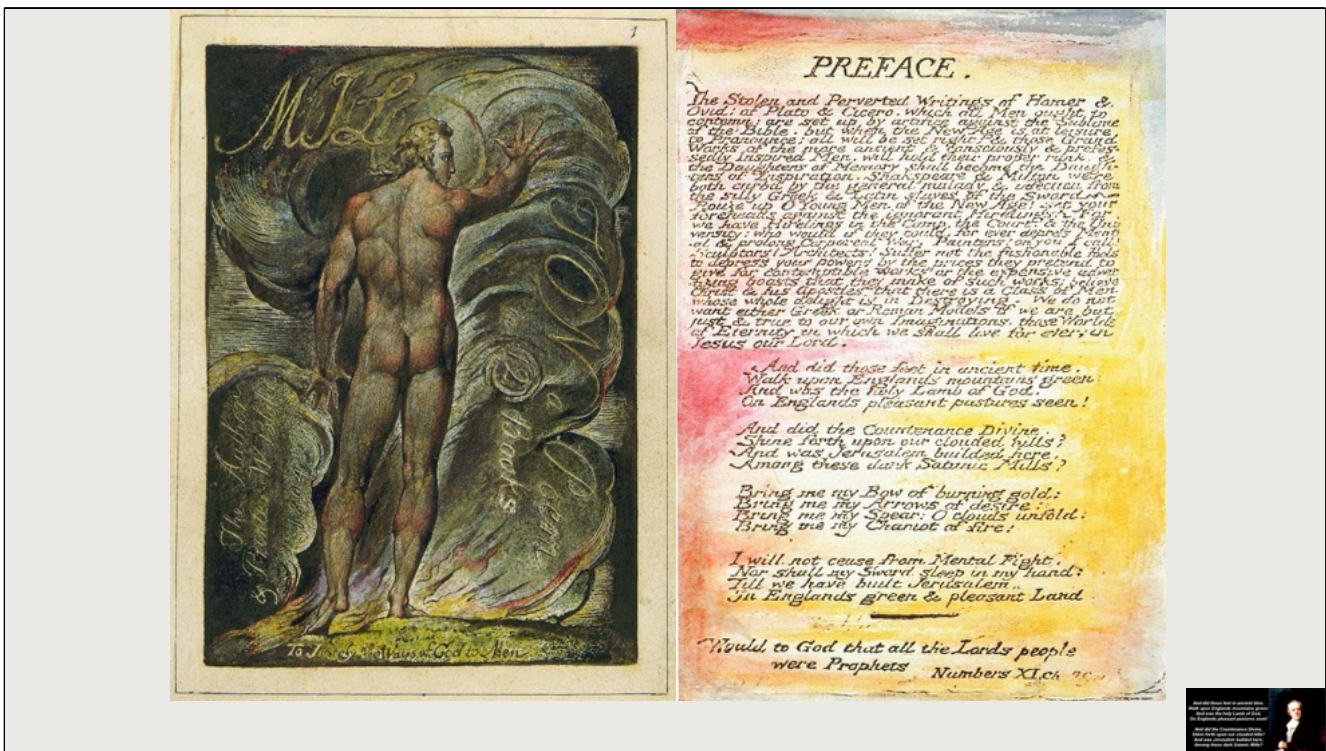
Sitters

- William Sharp (1729-1810), Surgeon to George III, at the top on the tiller and waving his tricorne hat.
- Elizabeth Prowse (née Sharp) (1733-1810), sister of Granville and William Sharp, at the piano.
- Judith Sharp (1733-1809), sister of Granville and William Sharp, holding the music.

- Frances Sharp (1738-1799), sister of Granville and William Sharp, with theorbo or angelica.
- Mary Lloyd-Baker (née Sharp) (1778-1812), daughter of William Sharp.
- Anna Jemima Sharp (born 1762?), daughter of John Sharp.
- Catherine Sharp (née Barwick) (1741?-1814), wife of William Sharp.
- Catherine Sharp (1770-1843), daughter of James Sharp.
- Granville Sharp (1735-1813), scholar and philanthropist, leaning on the piano and holding a flageolet and clarinet.
- James Sharp (1730-1783), ironmaster; brother of Granville and William Sharp, holds a serpent.
- Mrs James Sharp (née Lodge).
- Dr John Sharp (1723-1792), Archdeacon of Northumberland at the bottom right with Mary Sharp (née Dering) (1720-1798) his wife. He has laid his cello aside.

Granville Sharp and Jonathan Strong

- William Sharp treated the London poor and one night he was asked to help a slave beaten by his master. The man was Jonathan Strong and had been beaten so badly he was blind and required four months treatment at St Bartholomew's Hospital. Sharp got him a job with a pharmacist and two years later he was seen and kidnapped by his former owner David Lisle and sold to a Jamaican planter. Strong managed to get a message to Granville Sharp, William's brother, who contacted the Lord Mayor of London who called a hearing and declared Strong a free man. Lisle challenged Granville to a duel but he declined and Lisle took him to court for £200 damages for taking another man's property. The courts sided with the Sharp brothers and from this Granville dedicated the next fifty years, the rest of his life, to the abolition of slavery.



William Blake (1757-1827), title page of 'Milton a Poem', 1805

William Blake (1757-1827), preface, 'And did those feet in ancient times'

Reading of 'And did those feet in ancient time.' by Derek Jacobi

William Blake: The Visionary of the Romantic Age

While the Royal Academy was obsessing over "the line" and social status, **William Blake** was busy mapping the human soul. A poet, painter, and printmaker, Blake was the ultimate outsider—a man who claimed to see angels in trees and spirits in his workshop. He became a founding pillar of **Romanticism**, a movement that would fundamentally change how we see the world.

What was Romanticism?

Emerging in the late 18th century, Romanticism was a fierce rebellion against the "Age of Reason." If the Enlightenment was about science, logic, and factories, Romanticism was about:

- **Emotion over Logic:** Valuing "sensibility," passion, and the raw power of the imagination.
- **The Sublime in Nature:** A deep, almost religious respect for the wild, untamed world and the solitude it offered.
- **Nostalgia:** A longing for a "perfect" ancient past, free from the grime of the Industrial Revolution.
- **The Individual:** Celebrating the "genius" and the rebel over social convention.

As the philosopher **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** famously put it: "*Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.*" The Romantics wanted to break those chains.

Jerusalem: A Battle Cry Against "Satanic Mills"

Blake's most famous work, the poem "**And did those feet in ancient time**" (from the preface to his epic *Milton*, c. 1804–1808), perfectly captures this Romantic spirit.

- **The Legend:** The poem draws on the myth that a young Jesus visited England with Joseph of Arimathea.
- **The Conflict:** Blake asks if the "holy Lamb of God" could really have walked on England's "pleasant pastures" now that they are blighted by "**dark Satanic Mills**"—his metaphor for the hellish factories of the Industrial Revolution that he believed were

crushing the human spirit.

- **The Mental Fight:** He calls for a "Mental Fight" and mystical weapons—bows of burning gold and arrows of desire—not to kill, but to rebuild a spiritual "Jerusalem" in England's "green and pleasant land."

A Legacy of Fire

Blake's work was too radical for many of his contemporaries, but he paved the way for giants like **J.M.W. Turner** and **John Constable**. While he died in relative obscurity, his "Jerusalem" (set to music by Hubert Parry in 1916) became an alternative national anthem—a reminder of the Romantic belief that the imagination is the only force capable of redeeming a mechanical world.

Notes

The Romantic Age

- **Romantic.** Designating, relating to, or characteristic of a movement or style during the late 18th and 19th centuries in Europe marked by an emphasis on feeling, individuality, and passion rather than classical form and order, and typically preferring grandeur, picturesqueness, or naturalness to finish and proportion (Oxford English Dictionary). Compared with one of the modern meanings, such as 'overblown and flowery', 'having no foundation in fact', 'fantastic and extravagant', 'sentimental and idealistic', 'atmospheric, evocative and glamorous', 'chivalrous, devoted and selfless' or 'amorous, loving and affectionate'. To distinguish between the two we always write the 18th century movement with a capital letter.
- The Romantic period started in the eighteenth century but was at its peak between **1780 and 1850**. Among the greatest Romantic painters were **J.M.W. Turner** (1775-1851), **John Constable** (1776-1837) and **Henry Fuseli** (1741-1825), and overseas, Francisco Goya (1746-1828), Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), Theodore Gericault (1791-1824) and Eugene Delacroix (1798-63).
- The Romantic movement can be seen as a way of liberating human personality from the limitations of social convention and social morality. The great Romantic philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) said, 'Man is born free and everywhere is in chains'. He later stated in a controversial essay that 'Man is naturally good, and only by institutions is he made bad'. However, Rousseau's 'Social Contract' was regarded as even more dangerous as it advocated democracy and denied the divine right of kings: thus bringing Rousseau a storm of social condemnation.

Romantics:

- **Value emotions.** Romanticism regards **intense emotions** as providing an

authentic source of aesthetic experience and social validity. This included emotions such as **horror and awe** which were associated with a new aesthetic category, **the sublime**. **React against reason** and the 'Age of Enlightenment' with its assumption that all problems can be solved through the application of reason. Romanticism also created and valued childhood as an age of innocence whereas previously children were simply young adults who had not yet grown up.

- **Value nature.** **William Wordsworth** and **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** presented poetry as an expression of personal experience filtered through an individual's emotion and imagination. They believed the truest experience was to be **found in nature** and the sublime strengthened this through an appeal to the wilder aspects of nature where the sublime could be experienced directly. In search of the sublime, romantic poets wrote about **the exotic, the supernatural and the medieval**. But they also found beauty in the lives of simple rural people and aspects of the everyday world. The **second generation** of romantic poets included John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and George Gordon, Lord Byron. In Keats's great odes, intellectual and emotional sensibility merge in language of power and beauty. Shelley combined soaring lyricism with an apocalyptic political vision. His wife, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, wrote the greatest of the Gothic romances, *Frankenstein* (1818). Lord Byron was the prototypical romantic hero, the envy and scandal of the age. He has been continually identified with his own characters, particularly the rebellious, irreverent, erotically inclined Don Juan. Note that although the **Jane Austen** could be described as a Romantic author as she wrote during the romantic era but her work cannot be classified so easily. With exquisite subtlety she used irony to delineate human relationships within the context of English social life. Sir Walter Scott, Scottish nationalist and Romantic, made the genre of the historical novel widely popular. **React against academia**. It can be seen as a reaction against academic art and romanticism in the visual arts often involves a return to nature including plein-air painting, a belief in the goodness of humanity and justice for all and an emphasis on the importance of the sense and emotions rather than reason and intellect.
- **Value the past.** Romantics **valued the past** which had a charm and a beauty that had been destroyed by the industrial revolution. This nostalgia was focused on the medieval period of chivalric knights and brave deeds. Romantics value Ancient Greece and Rome a greatness which 'cannot pass away'(Shelley). This backward looking approach can be contrasted with the forward looking ideas of the Enlightenment and the ideas of progress. Romantics **reject progress**. It was partly a **reaction**

to the scientific reductionism of the age and the **negative aspects of the Industrial Revolution**.

- **Value the 'Hero'**. Intuition and emotion were regarded as more valid experiences to the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement therefore placed a high value on the experiences of the individual, particularly **the 'hero'**. The French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon turned many Romantics away from the hero towards supporting freedom and embracing **the politics of the people**. It is most clearly seen in the arts but can also be associated with the **politics of liberalism and radicalism** and even the emergence of **Romantic nationalism** in the mid-18th century where the nation is defined by the common cultural practices of the people rather than from the monarch downwards. **Reject monarchy** and the old top-down class system.
- **Value mysticism**. Romanticism was also **associated with mysticism** because mysticism rejected the need to understand everything. Romantic love has its roots in the Romantic movement and although marrying for love has ancient origins the Romantic movement gave the idea philosophical validity. **Reject technology** and the negative effects of progress.

Blake's Poem

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon England's mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On England's pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold;
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green & pleasant Land



John Constable (1776–1837), Sketch for 'Hadleigh Castle', c.1828–9, 122.6 x 167.3 cm, Tate

John Constable (1776–1837), Sketch for 'Hadleigh Castle', c.1828–9, 122.6 x 167.3 cm, Tate

The Landscape of Grief: Constable's *Hadleigh Castle* (c. 1828–9)

In late 1828, John Constable's world collapsed. His beloved wife, Maria, died of tuberculosis at just 41, leaving him to raise seven children alone. "The face of the World is totally changed to me," he wrote, falling into a deep, "anxious melancholy" that would define his later years.

A Full-Size Emotional Storm

This painting is a **full-size sketch**—a massive, raw rehearsal for the final "six-footer" now held at Yale. Unlike his earlier, sunnier views of the English countryside, *Hadleigh Castle* is a jagged, desolate ruin.

- **The Ruin:** The crumbling tower stands as a mirror to Constable's own broken life.
- **The Technique:** He used a palette knife to slash thick, expressive layers of paint across the canvas, capturing a stormy, restless energy that perfectly reflected his internal turmoil.

Financial Despair

Adding to his grief was a series of disastrous business moves. After Maria's father left her a £20,000 legacy, Constable speculated the money on a series of landscape **mezzotints**. He agonised over the engravings, clashed with his printers, and eventually failed to find enough subscribers.

Hadleigh Castle remains one of the most powerful examples of **Romanticism**: it isn't just a picture of a place, but a raw, unfiltered map of a human heart in mourning.

Constable's earlier works, like *The Hay Wain*, are famous for their peace and nostalgia. Looking at the jagged textures of *Hadleigh Castle*, do you think an artist's personal tragedy can actually make their work "better" or more honest, or does it just change the subject matter?

Notes

- This is a full-size oil sketch for the painting now in the Paul Mellon Collection at the Yale Center for British Art. Constable submitted the finished work to the Royal Academy exhibition in 1829, the year in which he was elected an Academician. He began painting six-foot canvases in 1818, in emulation of the works of the past masters of landscape such as

Claude, Poussin and Rubens. He saw these large pictures as a means to gain further recognition as an artist, and to elevate what many considered the mundane subject matter of rural scenery. Unable to paint from nature on this scale, he turned increasingly to invention, and these large studio sketches enabled him to work out the compositional problems he was encountering in the preparation of his exhibition pieces. The oil sketch would be made either prior to, or simultaneously with, the finished picture.

- Constable made a small pencil sketch of Hadleigh Castle near Southend in Essex in 1814, on his only visit to the area, when he wrote to his future wife Maria: 'At Hadleigh there is a ruin of a castle which from its situation is a really fine place - it commands a view of the Kent hills, the Nore and North Foreland & looking many miles to sea' (letter of 3 July 1814; in R.B. Beckett, ed., *John Constable's Correspondence*, II, Ipswich 1964, p.127). He returned to the pencil sketch fifteen years later, to develop the six-foot painting. He made a small preparatory oil sketch, probably in 1828 (Paul Mellon Collection, Upperville, Virginia), based on the drawing, but with the addition of a shepherd and his flock at the bottom left. In a pen and ink drawing made at around the same time (collection David Thomson), the composition has become decidedly more horizontal, having been extended on the right to include the distant Kent shore. A dog has replaced the shepherd's flock, and a tree has been added beside the castle's left-hand tower. The Tate's large oil sketch introduces cows in the middle-distance and gulls flying above the sea.
- Constable's wife Maria died in November 1828, and the sombre, desolate tone of the work is generally assumed to reflect his mood at this time. In a letter of 19 December of that year, he wrote to his brother Golding: 'I shall never feel again as I have felt, the face of the World is totally changed to me' (in C.R. Leslie, ed. Hon. Andrew Shirley, *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*, R.A., London 1937, p.234).



J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *Hannibal and his Men crossing the Alps*, 1810-1812, 144.7 × 236 cm, Tate Britain

J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *Hannibal and his Men crossing the Alps*, 1810-1812, 144.7 × 236 cm, Tate Britain

J.M.W. Turner: The Master of the Sublime Storm

While John Constable looked inward at his own grief, **J.M.W. Turner** looked outward at the terrifying majesty of the world. A child prodigy from Covent Garden, Turner became the "painter of light," eventually pushing landscape painting into a realm so expressive it bordered on abstraction.

Hannibal and his Men Crossing the Alps (1812)

This massive canvas is a textbook example of the **Sublime**—a Romantic concept where nature is so vast and powerful it inspires both awe and terror.

- **The Storm:** Hannibal's army isn't the focus here; the weather is. A swirling, apocalyptic black cloud dominates the sky, while an avalanche thunders down on the right.
- **The Hero:** Somewhere in the chaos, Hannibal is said to be riding an elephant, but he is dwarfed by the elements. Turner uses this to show that even the greatest "Great Men" of history are nothing compared to the fury of nature.
- **The Golden Light:** In the distance, we see the sunlit plains of Italy—the promised land that Hannibal's exhausted soldiers are fighting to reach.

History as a Mirror: Hannibal vs. Napoleon

Turner wasn't just painting the past; he was commenting on the present. In 1812, Britain was locked in the **Napoleonic Wars**.

- **The Comparison:** Turner saw a parallel between the ancient Punic Wars and the conflict with France. By identifying Napoleon with Hannibal, he created a cautionary tale about the high cost of ambition and the inevitable decay of empires.
- **Artistic Rivals:** Turner was likely influenced by Jacques-Louis David's famous, heroic portrait of *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*. But where David showed a calm leader on a rearing horse, Turner showed a messy, brutal struggle against the environment.

The Life of a Visionary

Turner was a controversial figure. He was a "working-class" genius who never lost his Cockney accent and frequently shocked the Royal Academy with his "unfinished" style. He would often turn up on "varnishing days" and add bold splashes of colour to his paintings right in front of his rivals.

Turner's work suggests that nature always wins in the end, regardless of human greatness. Does this perspective make the painting feel more "realistic" to you than the heroic, polished portraits of leaders like Napoleon, or does it feel too pessimistic?



Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, 1768, 183 x 244 cm, National Gallery (not on display)

Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797), *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, 1768, 183 x 244 cm, National Gallery (not on display)

Joseph Wright of Derby: The Painter of Light and Logic

While the grand masters in London were painting aristocrats, **Joseph Wright of Derby** was in the heart of the Midlands, capturing the birth of the modern world. He became the visual chronicler of the **Enlightenment**—a period defined by an obsession with reason, science, and the mastery of nature.

An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump (1768)

This is Wright's undisputed masterpiece, a "theatre of science" that captures the exact moment the cold logic of the Enlightenment began to collide with the emotional stirrings of **Romanticism**.

- **The Experiment:** A traveling scientist recreates Robert Boyle's famous vacuum experiment. He pumps the air out of a glass jar; inside, a rare white cockatoo flutters in panic as it suffocates.
- **The Audience:** Wright captures a spectrum of human reactions. Two young lovers have eyes only for each other, ignoring the bird's plight. A scientist looks out at us, the viewers, inviting us to decide: should he replace the air and save the bird, or continue the experiment in the name of progress?
- **The Lighting:** Wright uses a single candle hidden behind a flask to create dramatic *chiaroscuro* (strong contrasts of light and dark). This wasn't just for atmosphere; it suggests that science is the "new light" illuminating the darkness of ignorance.

From Enlightenment to Romanticism: A Changing World

Wright's career bridges the gap between two seismic shifts in Western thought:

- **The Age of Enlightenment (Reason):** This was the world of the **Lunar Society**, a group of "natural philosophers" and industrial pioneers who met during the full moon. They believed the world could be understood, measured, and improved through objective experimentation.
- **The Romantic Age (Sensibility):** You can see this emerging in the weeping girls at the side of the air pump. They don't care about the "data" of the vacuum; they care about

the suffering of the living creature. Romanticism prioritized **how we feel** over what we know.

The Life of a "Derby" Genius

Unlike his contemporaries who flocked to London, Wright stayed largely in the provinces, painting the "uningratiating realism" of the new industrial middle class. His patrons were a mix of serious scientists and hedonistic rebels, like **Dr. Benjamin Bates**, a member of the notorious **Hellfire Club**.

The Modern Paradox

Wright's work mirrors the world we live in today. We are children of both movements: We use **Enlightenment** reason to build the technology of an iPhone. We use that same iPhone to broadcast our **Romantic** individual subjectivity and personal feelings. We trust science to cure a disease through objective experimentation, yet we often prioritize "how we feel" about a topic over what the data suggests. In *The Air Pump*, the scientist asks us if the bird's life is worth the price of knowledge. In our modern world, we are still asking the same question: does our pursuit of objective progress risk losing our "humanity" and empathy?

Notes

- **Joseph Wright of Derby and the Art of the Industrial Revolution**
- At the time, the *Gazetteer's* reviewer singled out Wright's handling of candlelight as evidence that 'Mr. Wright, of Derby, is a **very great and uncommon genius in a peculiar way**' (23 May 1768).
It has become his best known work and it shows a lecturer holding the power of life and death over a white bird. A well-known art historian described it as '**one of the wholly original masterpieces of British art**'.
- The painting depicts a natural philosopher, a forerunner of the modern scientist, recreating one of Robert Boyle's air pump experiments, in which a bird is deprived of air, before a varied group of onlookers. The group exhibits a variety of reactions, but for most of the audience scientific curiosity overcomes concern for the bird. The central figure looks out of the picture as if inviting the viewer's participation in the outcome.
- In 1659 Robert Boyle commissioned an air pump (then called a pneumatic engine) which was so successful he donated it to the Royal Society and commissioned two more. There were only a handful of such pumps in existence at the time and Boyle's pumps were designed, built and operated by Robert Hooke as they were so temperamental. Boyle carried out 43 experiments of which two were on animals. One tested the ability of insects to fly in rarefied air and the other tested the ability of many different animals to survive with rarefied air. By 1768 air pumps were relatively common and were used by itinerant lecturers in natural philosophy who toured the country entertaining audiences in town halls and wealthy person's homes. One of the best known was James Ferguson, a Scottish astronomer who was probably a friend of Wright. Typically a small bladder was used to simulate the lungs as using a live animal was regarded as '**too shocking to every spectator who has the least degree of humanity**'. Wright shows a white cockatoo fluttering in panic and the lecturer

looks out at the viewer as if to ask us to judge whether the pumping should continue, killing the bird, or whether the air should be replaced and the cockatoo saved. The boy on the right is either lowering the cage to replace the bird or raising the cage as he knows it will die. Alternatively, it has been suggested he is drawing the curtains to block out the full moon. In an earlier sketch the lecturer is reassuring the girls and the bird does survive. The cockatoo was a **rare bird** at the time, **'and one whose life would never in reality have been risked in an experiment such as this'**.

- The full moon could suggest the Lunar Society to his friends as it met every full moon.
- The arrangement of figures has been linked to the last plate of Hogarth's *The Four Stages of Cruelty* showing the audience gathered around the dissection of the corpse. The painting has also been compared with Early Netherlandish paintings of the Holy Trinity which show the Holy Spirit as a dove, God the Father pointing and Christ gesturing in blessing to the viewer.
- Wright painted *Air Pump without a commission* and the picture was purchased by **Dr Benjamin Bates**. An Aylesbury physician, patron of the arts and hedonist, Bates was a diehard member of the **Hellfire Club** who, despite his excesses, lived to be over 90. Wright's account book shows a number of prices for the painting: £200 is shown in one place and £210 in another, but Wright had written to Bates asking for **£130**, stating that the **low price 'might much injure me** in the future sale of my pictures, and when I send you a receipt for the money I shall acknowledge a greater sum.' Whether Bates ever paid the full amount is not recorded; Wright only notes in his account book that he received £30 in part payment.
- Wright worked in Liverpool between 1768 and 1771 and his main income was from portraiture. His portraits have an uningratiating realism far removed from the 'polite' portraiture of his contemporaries.
- Hellfire Clubs were established for 'persons of quality' who wished to engage in immoral activities. The most famous was set up by Sir Francis Dashwood and engaged in mock religious ceremonies, drinking, wenching and banqueting. It was a popular fashion at the time to ridicule religion and commit acts of blasphemy.

References

National Gallery website

Transcript of a National Gallery interview with

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/podcasts/the-national-gallery-podcast-episode-nineteen>

Jenny Uglow on 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump'

Miranda Hinkley (in the studio): Cloning, GM crops, nuclear power – it seems as if science has never been so contentious. It's easy to blame this ambivalence on the pace of progress and imagine it's a modern phenomenon. But in fact it's nothing new as a look at

one of the Gallery's most famous paintings – An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump – reveals. Author and historian Jenny Uglow told me more.

Miranda Hinkley (in the Gallery): I'm standing in front of an 18th-century painting which is a moment frozen in time. There's a group of figures all gathered around a kitchen table, all the members of the family and in the centre is a rather enigmatic looking character with lots of white long bushy hair, who appears to be conducting some kind of experiment on a cockatoo that's trapped in a bell jar. Jenny, what's going on here? Who is this character in the middle?

Jenny Uglow: The man in the middle is a travelling lecturer or demonstrator. He's demonstrating one of the exciting aspects of the demonstrator's art, which is the air pump. And he's got a very large glass vessel poised on a column and in the glass vessel is a bird and the bird is fluttering and near to death because from the pump down below – you can see the handle, glistening handle, next to those pistons – he's extracted all the air from the glass, but his hand is poised just above it to let us know that if he pulled the stopcock at any moment, he could flood the glass vessel with air again and the bird would revive.

Miranda Hinkley: So this was painted by Joseph Wright 'of Derby' who... there are a number of works by him dealing with the advance of science and the industrial revolution...

Jenny Uglow: Yes, Joseph Wright grew up in Derby which was one of the main centres of the industrial Midlands. It had instrument makers, it had silk mills, and he was fascinated as a child by mechanics and he went off as a child to be apprenticed as a painter but many of his friends when he came back to Derby were experimental scientists or were industrialists so they were making very important and exciting discoveries.

Miranda Hinkley: So Wright would have understood quite well what was happening in this painting in this process.

Jenny Uglow: Yes, Wright would understand absolutely the process that he's showing. He'd have seen demonstrators do it, but also he asked his friends for help when he didn't understand things. So he's not just making evocative pictures, he's showing something that he really understands.

It's quite technical – there are a lot of other things in the painting which are to do with pneumatics. It's a lecture on pneumatics, how the world changes if you do remove the air – they've got these Magdeburg spheres here, which you put together and if you suck the air out of them they just cling to each other and you can't separate them, and this mysterious object in the jar, which people used to think was a skull, a sort of memento mori, a reminder of death, and then people said no it's a sheep's bladder, and somebody very persuasively said actually it's human lungs. And again that goes with the feeling that the painting is actually about air and the power of air because Wright was an asthmatic. It was desperately important to him the whole act of breathing and one that was very painful and mysterious and precious.

Miranda Hinkley: This sort of a scene is quite alien to us today in the sense that you don't have wandering scientists who come and reveal the wonders of nature to you in your own home anymore. But I think there's something here about people's attitudes to science and kind of different feelings towards it.

Jenny Uglow: Yes, of course there is. It's actually ever since this period that scientists have been thought of as rather dangerous, partly because the scientific endeavour, the rationalist endeavour, was associated with the philosophes in France who were behind the French Revolution. So that when the French Revolution came they actually turned on the scientists, the natural philosophers, in their midst and said – 'well, look what that comes to'. And scientists were then, as it were, set apart – mysterious experimenters.

People always think that you're dabbling with the secrets of nature. It's very like the things that frighten us today, like cloning, you know, like creating alien forms of life. This is very dangerous and yet if you're going to cure something like Wright's own asthma, you've got to know about the mechanics of breathing and of air, so it's a good thing. We want the advantages of science but we're always a bit frightened that we're tapping into a power that could actually hurt us.

Miranda Hinkley: There's something really striking about this painting. It's not just the arrangement of the figures and the way he's captured everyone's thoughts so perfectly in their faces, it's also the contrast of light and dark and the sort of light of knowledge kind of penetrating the surrounding darkness...

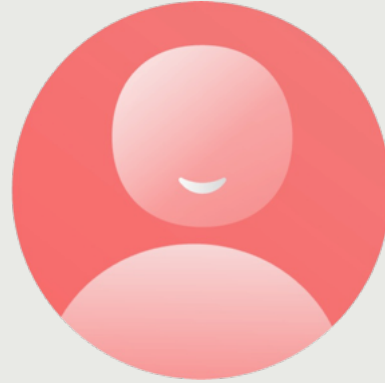
Jenny Uglow: It is. And if you think of it as a kind of demonstration it's also like a bit of theatre, isn't it. It's like something glowing on a stage and it pulls you in. There's... it makes you think of earlier paintings, which are actually not scientific paintings, but religious paintings, which have this glowing mystery at their heart. And in the National Gallery, there's a little early painting where the Christ Child in the manger is actually glowing almost, exactly like this, and the faces are lit up watching him, so this is like a new miracle, this is a new way of understanding the meaning of life.



12-02 BRITISH ART: 1500-1800

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE

WWW.SHAFE.CO.UK



- That brings me to the end of this long talk on the history of British art over three hundred years from 1500 to 1800. There is a lot more in my individual talks on the artists and art movements of the period which I hope you will enjoy.
- Goodbye for now and I hope you will come back soon.



A Free Course on the History of Western Art



Dr Laurence Shafe

www.shafe.co.uk