



A Free Course on the History of Western Art

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17-08 ZOFFANY AND THE CONVERSATION PIECE

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Palma Vecchio
(c. 1480–1528)
The Virgin and
Child with
Saints and a
Donor
c. 1518–1520

This talk traces the conversation piece from its Italian devotional roots — the *Sacra conversazione* — through Rubens, Watteau, and Hogarth, to its full flowering in Georgian Britain. We examine how Devis, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Stubbs, and ultimately Zoffany used intimate group portraiture to negotiate questions of class, commerce, family, and self-presentation. By the end, a single genre will have revealed an entire society in the act of deciding how it wished to be seen.



Palma Vecchio (c. 1480–1528)
The Virgin and Child with Saints and a Donor
 c. 1518–1520
 105 x 136 cm
 Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum,
 Madrid

Palma Vecchio (c. 1480–1528), *The Virgin and Child with Saints and a Donor*, c. 1518–1520, 105 x 136 cm, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid

The forerunner of the English conversation piece was the **Sacra conversazione**, in which the Virgin and Child appear in the company of saints drawn from different historical eras, sometimes alongside the patron who commissioned the work. **Palma Vecchio**, born Jacomo Nigretti de Lavallo and trained within the Venetian school alongside **Lorenzo Lotto** and under the influence of **Titian**, returned to the Sacra conversazione throughout his career. His treatment of it allows scholars to trace a fairly precise chronology across roughly two decades of work. This painting, dated to c. **1518–20**, includes a kneeling donor identified as **Francesco Priuli**, Procurator of Venice from 1522. His black robe, rather than the red of a Procurator, confirms the picture predates that appointment. **Philip Rylands** noted that the poses of Mary Magdalene and Saint John the Baptist derive from Averroës and Pythagoras in **Raphael's** **School of Athens**. Saint Catherine carries both the shattered wheel of her martyrdom and the palm of Christian

victory. **Francesco Sansovino** documented the painting in 1581 in the Palazzo Priuli; it later entered the **Thyssen-Bornemisza** collection.

Notes

The Sacra conversazione is a composition in which the Virgin and Child are surrounded by saints of different historical eras, and on occasions, by donors (as in the present example). The kneeling figure leaning towards the Virgin, who draws the Christ Child's attention to him, has been tentatively identified as Francesco Priuli. Priuli was one of Palma Vecchio's patrons in Venice and was Procurator of the Republic of Venice in 1522, one of nine who were second only to the Doge.

Mary Magdalene is holding her pot of balm and Saint John the Baptist is identified by the lamb, cross and hair shirt. Mary Magdalene is identified as a repentant prostitute or loose woman, however, these claims are not supported by the canonical gospels. The identity of Mary Magdalene is believed to have been merged with the identity of the unnamed sinner who anoints Jesus' feet in Luke 7:36-50. On the right is St Catherine of Alexandria, Christian saint and virgin, who was martyred in the early 4th century at the hands of the pagan emperor Maxentius. According to her hagiography, she was both a princess and a noted scholar, who became a Christian around the age of fourteen, and converted hundreds of people to Christianity. She is holding the wheel on which she was to be killed but at her touch it shattered and so she was beheaded. She is also holding the palm branch that was awarded to victorious athletes in ancient Greece and signifies in Christian iconography the victory of martyrs.

Palma Vecchio (c. 1480-1528, Jacopo Palma il Vecchio, real name Jacomo Nigretti de Lavallo) was an Italian painter of the Venetian school and was reputedly a companion and competitor of Lorenzo Lotto (c. 1480-1556/57) and so some extent a pupil of Titian (1488/90-1576).

This painting has been identified as the one mentioned by Francesco Sansovino in his guide to Venice published in 1581, entitled *Venezia Città Nobilissima*, in the section on the palazzo Priuli. In the 17th century it would appear that Marina Priuli gave the painting to the Venetian Senate. The painting was hung over one of the doors in the Hall of the Council of Ten. The painting passed through various owners until it was acquired for the

Thyssen-Bornemisza collection.

This *Sacra conversazione* has been dated to around 1518–20, partly on the basis that it must have been painted before Francesco Priuli was appointed Procurator of the Republic. Had he already been Procurator, he would have been painted in the red robe of office, rather than the black that he wears here. The work falls within Palma's mature period, although we can still detect features that recall his earliest works, such as the hands and sleeves of Saint Catherine, which resemble those of Mary Magdalen in *The Flight into Egypt* in the Uffizi. Palma organised the present composition around his monumental presentation of the Virgin and Child, who are surrounded by four judiciously placed figures set on slightly different planes around the central group. Rylands drew attention to the two figures on the left. He noted that the poses of Mary Magdalen, identifiable by her pot of balm, and Saint John the Baptist with the lamb, cross and hair shirt are inspired by those of Averroës and Pythagoras in Raphael's *School of Athens*.

Within Palma's oeuvre, the *Sacra conversazione* was one of the most frequent subjects. This fact, combined with the evident stylistic evolution within these works, has made it possible to establish a relatively exact chronology for this part of his oeuvre, starting from around 1510 with the examples now in the Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, and concluding in 1528, the date of the artist's death and of the composition in the Accademia, Venice.

References

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Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640)
The Garden of Love
1630–35
Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain

Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), *The Garden of Love*, 1630–35, Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain

Rubens's *Garden of Love* stands as a pivotal link between Italian Renaissance *fête champêtre* painting and the eighteenth-century gallantry scenes of Watteau and Pater. Rubens painted it to celebrate his marriage to **Helena Fourment**, a sixteen-year-old from a respectable Antwerp merchant family. He was fifty-three and a widower; his first wife, **Isabella Brandt**, had died of plague in **1626**. In a letter, Rubens explained his choice of Helena over a court lady by noting that a noblewoman would blush to see him take up his brushes — a remark that tells us much about how he understood the relationship between his domestic life and his practice. The composition stages an allegory of conjugal love in the Mannerist portico of Rubens's own Antwerp garden. Helena appears at the left. Cupids carry a yoke and paired doves, both symbols of marriage; a fountain sculpture of the **Three Graces** signals fecundity; the peacock at right invokes Juno, protector of matrimony. As **Elise Goodman** has shown, Flemish fascination with French courtly style shaped this

glamorised vision of privileged sociability. Early inventories called it *Rubens' Family*, but the work is finally an exaltation of married happiness rendered through layered classical allegory.

Notes

Peter Paul Rubens, in particular his *Garden of Love* (1633, Prado Museum), gave an impetus and direction to the development of the genre.

In the 17th century Flanders there was a fashion for French style and etiquette which 'created a distinct and glamorous life-style for the privileged classes and for those who sought to imitate them'. (Elise Goodman)

In a letter Rubens explained how he decided to marry Helena Fourment (1614-1673), a young woman from an 'honest but middle-class family' even though he was recommended to marry a woman from court society, because a society woman would 'blush to see me take my brushes in hand'. Rubens was a widower of 53 and she was a girl of 16.

In the *Garden of Love* Rubens celebrated his marriage to Helena Fourment, his second wife. Helena, the woman deemed 'the most beautiful in Antwerp', is seen in the painting. They had five children and when Rubens died she married a Count and had five more children. His first wife, Isabella Brandt (1591-1626), daughter of a leading Antwerp citizen, died when she was 34 of the plague. Rubens had three children by Isabella.

This scene from a court feast takes place in a relaxed atmosphere in which a group of persons flirt in an idyllic garden. The cupids around the group carry symbols of conjugal love, including a pair of doves and the yolk carried by the cupid in the upper left part of the composition. The fountains or sculptures of the three Graces and of Venus nursing signify fecundity and marital happiness, while the peacock symbolizes the goddess, Juno, who protects matrimony. The cupid at top left has two doves on a leash and carries a yoke, both symbols of married love. The peacock on the far right symbolizes the goddess Juno who protects marriage. The Mannerist portico is similar to the style of the buildings in Rubens's garden in Antwerp. In the portico we see the couples are hiding from jets of water, a common amusement in gardens of the 16th century.

Rubens uses motives from Renaissance sculptures, but sets the scene in the mannerist portico of his own house in Antwerp, which led to the idea that it

was a self-portrait with friends. In the early inventories it was called Rubens' Family, but in any case, it is an allegory and exaltation of conjugal love and happiness.

The subject is a traditional medieval one, in which lovers were shown conventionally in a garden, sometimes with moral messages or symbols accompanying them. In the Italian Renaissance the theme had been represented in 'fête champêtres' such as the one attributed to Giorgione or Titian in the Louvre. This picture by Rubens is an important link in the tradition running from those works to the scenes of Watteau and Pater in the eighteenth century.

Delphi Complete Works of Peter Paul Rubens

"Completed in 1632 and housed in Madrid's Museo del Prado, The Garden of Love was painted immediately following Rubens marriage to Helena Fourment to celebrate their union. The painting presents a complex allegory of the theme of love, evoking numerous interpretations from art scholars since its first unveiling. On a surface level, it depicts a lavish garden party, with Rubens and his sixteen-year-old bride on the left, accompanied by her sisters and brothers-in-law. However, other commentators have identified a Neoplatonic allegory of love, charting a woman's initiation into the three stages of love, as portrayed by the three seated women. The stages of love include sensual, earthly and celestial love, as various aspects of love are presented in the composition. Other critics judge The Garden of Love as a visual display of the mores of social gallantry and aristocratic courtship. The theme of love, of course, dominates the canvas, with the iconography of apposite sculptures placed throughout the scene. On the right a sculpture of the goddess Venus, sitting on a dolphin, watches the new union, with an almost demonic expression on her face, while her breasts serve as watering fountains. Standing at the opposite end of the composition, Venus' son Cupid, the god of love, urges the newly-wed couple forward. In the obscured grotto, unexpected splashes of water surprise the embracing couples. A group statue of the Three Graces adds a sense of culture to an otherwise risqué scene."



Antoine Watteau (1684–1721)
Les Plaisirs du bal
 c. 1715-17
 52.5 × 65.2 cm
 Dulwich Picture Gallery

Antoine Watteau (1684–1721), *Les Plaisirs du bal*, c. 1715-17, 52.5 × 65.2 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery

Watteau's reputation grew largely after his death, making his influence on subsequent generations all the more remarkable. Working within the **fête galante** genre he effectively invented, Watteau drew on **Rubens** and sixteenth-century Venetian painting for his open brushwork and broken colour, whilst transforming the coarser Dutch merry-making tradition into something altogether more psychologically nuanced. In this scene, couples flirt and dance the minuet across an airy woodland setting, their gestures weaving a complex emotional web that **John Constable** described as painted "in honey: so mellow, so tender, so soft and so delicious." To the left, stock figures from **Commedia dell'arte** — Harlequin, Pierrot, and Mezzetin — blur the boundary between theatre and lived experience, a tension Watteau sustains throughout. Two figures, a turbaned boy and a servant pouring wine, derive directly from **Paolo Veronese's** **Christ and the Centurion** (c.1571, now in the **Prado**), a work that passed through the collection of Thomas Howard before Philip IV dispatched it to El

Escorial. Watteau's borrowings are never mere quotation; they are fully absorbed into a new and coherent vision of elegance, melancholy, and fleeting pleasure.

Notes

The conversation piece may also owe something to Watteau in terms of its atmosphere and combination of the formal and the informal in a natural setting.

Watteau was not well known in his lifetime but has influenced artists ever since. He is an artist that borrowed from previous artists but who brought a new way of seeing the world. He is best known as the creator of a genre called *fête galante* ('merry party') which can be traced back to 17th-century Dutch merry-making scenes. Watteau's scenes are more subtle and show the delicate world of gesture representing emotion. In the centre a couple is dancing a minuet and either side the numerous groups engage in their own forms of gentile flirtation and love making. The numerous scenes of couples are harmoniously united by Watteau's ability to weave together their complex psychological interactions.

The airy woodland setting and the sheen of fabrics are derived from Watteau's open brushwork and broken colours which are typical of Rubens and 16th-century Venetian painting. The figure of the black boy wearing a turban gazing down from the balcony and the figure of the servant boy pouring wine are based on Veronese's *Christ and the Centurion*.

On the left are figures of Harlequin, the light-hearted servant who is always thwarting his master, Pierrot, the sad clown who pins for Columbine who usually leaves him for Harlequin and Mezzetin, a schemer and trouble-maker who often resorts to violence, all stock figures from the *Comedia dell'arte*, illustrating the delicate balance between theatre and reality. *Comedia dell'arte* began in 16th century Italy and it consisted originally of improvised sketches.

The whole scene is enveloped in a light ochre, which inspired John Constable to say that Watteau's painting seems '...[to be] painted in honey: so mellow, so tender, so soft and so delicious.'

Paulo Veronese (1528-1588), *Christ and the Centurion*, c. 1571, 192 x 297 cm, Prado

With a halo of sainthood over his head, Jesus extends his arm to the centurion who, having converted to the Christian faith, kneels at his feet, as told in the New Testament (Matthew 8, 5-13). The scene takes place in front of an architectural backdrop inspired by the work of the architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580). The work gains dramatic intensity, as both the grandiloquent postures of its characters and their sumptuous clothing recall the theatre of that period. This painting belonged to Thomas Howard, 21st Earl of Arundel and following his death in 1646 it was acquired by Philip IV (1605-1665), who sent it to El Escorial, where it remained until it entered the Prado Museum in 1839.

References

Dulwich Picture Gallery



William Hogarth (1697-1764)
The Popple and Ashley Families
1730
63.1 x 75.1 cm
Royal Collection

William Hogarth (1697-1764), *The Popple and Ashley Families*, 1730, 63.1 x 75.1 cm, Royal Collection

The Popple siblings represent exactly the kind of prosperous, empire-building family that **William Hogarth** made his reputation painting in the late 1720s and early 1730s. Henry, the eldest, published his landmark map of the **British North American Colonies in 1733**; **Alured (1699–1744)** became Governor of Bermuda; and **William (1701–64)**, playwright and colonial solicitor, sits at the right baiting a fishing line — his daughter **Marianne (1724–99)** storing the bait in her father's hat, a comic touch fully characteristic of Hogarth's later work. Their sister **Sophia (1704–78)** sits at the far left beneath an owl, the attribute of Minerva, goddess of wisdom — a quietly fitting emblem for a family of merchants and governors. The wild landscape behind them echoes the unmapped territories the brothers were already administering. Elizabeth Einberg proposes that Sophia commissioned the group portrait before one or more brothers departed for colonial service. As one of Hogarth's earliest conversation pieces, the composition shows the limits of his self-teaching: figures sit in isolation, the arrangement

rambles. Yet the fishing vignette works beautifully — biography and image locked together in a single, legible human moment.

Notes

The sitters in *The Popple Family* are four siblings from this prosperous mercantile and colonial family. Three Popple brothers are arranged in discreet order of seniority: in the middle and standing highest is Henry (date of birth unknown but probably the eldest), who was Clerk at the Board of Trade and Plantations in 1727 and published a map of the British North American Colonies in 1733; to the left stands Alured (1699-1744), appointed Secretary to the Board of Trade and Plantations in 1730 and Governor of Bermuda in 1737-44; sitting on a bank on the right is their younger brother William (1701-64), who was a playwright and poet as well as Solicitor to the Board of Trade and Plantations and Governor of Bermuda (1747-63). William is baiting a fishing line with the help of his wife, Mary (1704-73), and daughter, Marianne (1724-99) and as a little joke Marianne is using father's hat to hold the bait. At the extreme left sits their sister, Sophia (1704-78), with an owl perched in a tree above her head. Einberg suggests that she may have commissioned this family group prior to one or more of the brothers' departure for colonial service.

Marianne's grand-daughter Marianne Skerrett (1793-1887) was dresser and secretary to Queen Victoria to whom she bequeathed this painting, along with the identification of her grand-mother but unfortunately none of the other sitters.

One of the earliest of Hogarth's conversations this work betrays the awkwardness of a self-taught painter: the figures are isolated and the composition rambling. The brothers seem to be engaged in some sort of debate, with William pointing to what appears to be an illustration in his book. However, the only really successful element of narrative is in the family group fishing, with a patient mother consoled by her affectionate sister-in-law, and an excited daughter, who has presumably had the idea of storing the bait in her father's hat, a piece of comic seasoning typical of Hogarth's later conversation pieces. The landscape is wilder than the man-made parklands of the day and suggests the remote wildernesses which the brothers were already involved in mapping and administering. The temple may be dedicated to Minerva, goddess of wisdom, whose attribute is the owl and who seems an appropriate deity for a family of merchants and colonial

governors.

ReferencesText adapted from *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of fashionable life*, London, 2009



William Hogarth (1697–1764)
A Scene from 'The Beggar's Opera' VI
 1731
 57.2 x 76.2 cm
 Tate Britain, London

William Hogarth (1697–1764), *A Scene from 'The Beggar's Opera' VI*, 1731, 57.2 x 76.2 cm, Tate Britain, London

The conversation piece emerged in **1720s Britain** alongside the novel — twin inventions of a rising middle class that found allegorical portraits and epic poetry too remote from lived experience. **William Hogarth**, Britain's first native-born painter of genuine international stature, drove this shift. His "**Scene from The Beggar's Opera**" (1728) is among the earliest paintings ever made of an English stage performance. The subject is **John Gay's** satirical opera, first performed at **Lincoln's Inn Theatre**, and Hogarth seizes its most charged moment: the highwayman **Macheath** stands centre stage, chained and condemned, while his two lovers — the jailer's daughter **Lucy Lockit** and the lawyer's daughter **Polly Peachum** — plead for his life on either side of him. Hogarth blurs the boundary between theatre and society by including real audience members at the painting's edges. At the far right stands the **Duke of Bolton**, whose gaze fixes not on the drama but on the actress **Lavinia Fenton**, his real-life lover, playing Polly. The painting is simultaneously performance record, social portrait, and

commentary on desire and status — exactly the layered ambition that distinguishes Hogarth from every British painter before him.

Notes

Conversation pieces came into fashion during the 1720s, largely due to the influence of William Hogarth, Britain's first native-born painter of international stature. Significantly, they arose at the same time as a new literary development, the novel. Not until the later 1700s did the British innovations of conversation pictures and fictional novels become common in other Western nations.

A large new middle class emerged as Britain's colonial empire expanded and its Industrial Revolution began. Socially spurned by the aristocracy, these wealthy merchants, industrialists, and colonial landowners developed their own more natural and casual manners that made perfect themes to enliven both novels and group portraits.

Conversation pieces and novels, by fictionally portraying situations from real life, differ from the allegorical portraits and epic poetry preferred by the nobility. Prosperous middle-class people who normally commissioned conversation pieces are similar to the characters who populate such novels as Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, *A Foundling*, or Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

This is among the first paintings ever made of an English stage performance. It depicts a climactic scene from John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, first performed at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre in 1728. Here the opera's central character, a highwayman named Macheath, stands chained, under sentence of death, between his two lovers, the jailer's daughter, Lucy Lockit, and, to the right, the lawyer's daughter, Polly Peachum. They in turn plead for his life. At either side of the stage Hogarth has included members of the audience, notably at the far right the Duke of Bolton, real-life lover of the actress, Lavinia Fenton, who played the part of Polly Peachum.



After William Hogarth (1697–1764)
A Midnight Modern Conversation
 1733
 Engraving
 132 x 145.5 cm
 National Trust, Petworth House

After William Hogarth (1697–1764), *A Midnight Modern Conversation*, 1733, 132 x 145.5 cm, National Trust, Petworth House

Hogarth's **A Midnight Modern Conversation**, engraved in **1733**, became his most widely circulated print, sold across Europe as far as Russia, though the original painting is now lost — a copy survives at **Petworth House**. The setting is **St John's Coffee House, Shire Lane**, and eleven figures crowd the scene alongside twenty-three empty bottles. The clock reads four in the morning, yet drinking continues. At the centre sit a lawyer — possibly **Kettleby**, a barrister famous for his oratory, full-bottomed wig, and squint — and a parson, identified by some as **Orator Henley**. A man addressing the lawyer appears vacant, seemingly recounting how incompetent counsel lost him his case; the barrister, characteristically unembarrassed, insists the man's failure was simply in not hiring a gentleman. Around them, chaos accumulates with magnificent precision. A **Justice of the Peace** in nightcap smokes with both hands occupied. A politician, so far gone he cannot manage a candle, is setting fire to his own sleeve. Another candle drifts toward the parson's wig. On the floor, a soldier bearing facial scars receives

the attentions of an apothecary — who, naturally, administers more drink. Hogarth gives us not moral panic but gleeful, forensic observation.

Notes

Many of Hogarth's paintings and engravings are conversation pieces, often with a satirical twist.

This the most popular of Hogarth's engravings. The original painting has been lost but there is a copy produced by an unknown artist at Petworth House. Copies of the engraving were sold all over Europe, including Russia. There are 11 people and 23 empty bottles. They are mostly still actively drinking although the clock shows it is 4:00 in the morning. The hypothetical conversation was turned into a play that was performed at Covent Garden and the following was taken from the play.

The scene is St John's Coffee House in Shire Lane and some of the figures can be identified. In the centre, seated are a lawyer and a priest. The lawyer could be Lord Northington or Kettleby, a barrister who was well-known for his oratory, his full-bottomed wig and a squint. The priest is Parson Ford or orator Henley. The figure toasting over the Parson is linked with John Harrison, a tobacconist in Bell Yard and a friend of Hogarth.

The person addressing the lawyer is shown as vacant or an imbecile and may be telling some common legal tale such as how he lost his case because of his idiot lawyer. The Barrister is saying that he deserved the treatment he had received, for not employing a gentleman in the business. Had you, says he, 'given me the management of your cause, right or wrong I should have brought you through the piece.'

The figure on the left, smoking, with a night-cap on is a Justice of the Peace or a portrait of Chandler, a book-binder in Shire Lane. His cloak, hat, and wig, are hung up near him. His left elbow is supported by the table, and his right by the back of a chair, each hand busily employed with the implements of smoking.

The politician in the opposite corner is also probably a portrait and he is so far gone that he is setting fire to his sleeve with the candle he is using to try to light his pipe. Another candle is about to set fire to the parson's wig.

The person on the floor is a soldier, his forehead marked with scars over which the helpful apothecary is pouring drink.



Arthur Devis (1711–1787)
Mr and Mrs Atherton
c. 1743
92 x 127 cm
Walker Art Gallery

Arthur Devis (1711–1787), *Mr and Mrs Atherton*, c. 1743, 92 x 127 cm, Walker Art Gallery

Four painters of the conversation piece now come into focus, beginning with **Arthur Devis (1712–1787)** and his portrait **Mr and Mrs Atherton**. Devis trained first as a sporting and topographical artist, which explains why animals and landscape carry such weight in his compositions. His interiors and exteriors were largely invented rather than observed, yet that artifice was precisely what his patrons wanted. The **Athertons** were a prominent Preston family — William Atherton a wealthy wool trader and former Mayor — and Devis flatters them by filling their sparse, doll-like setting with conspicuous consumer goods whilst quietly omitting anything less desirable. The bare floor is itself a status marker: fixed carpets were not common in European interiors until trade routes between **Persia** and Western Europe opened later in the **18th century**, with domestic weaving only beginning at **Wilton, Wiltshire** around the same period. Devis enjoyed his greatest success between **1748 and 1758**, after which **Joshua Reynolds** and **Johann Zoffany** made his style look dated. Horace Walpole was openly critical.

By the 1770s Devis was largely reduced to restoration work, most notably **Sir James Thornhill's** paintings at the Painted Hall, Greenwich. He retired to Brighton in 1783 and died there four years later.

Notes

We will next see four different artists who painted conversation pieces. This is *Mr and Mrs Atherton* by Arthur Devis (19 February 1712 – 25 July 1787) was an English portrait painter based in Cheshire who was particularly known for his conversation pieces. Arthur Devis first trained as a sporting and topographical artist, which explains the prominence given to animals and landscapes in his portraits. The exteriors and interiors were mostly invented by Devis.

A conversation piece could also be an interior group.

Devis was a popular artist among leading middle-class families and these doll-like figures set in what we consider a bare living room is what his patrons required. The Atherton's were an important family in Preston, a thriving port on the river Ribble. William Atherton was a wealthy wool trader and was at one time Mayor of Preston. Devis shows what was a modern and fashionable interior in which he has highlighted the expensive consumer goods and omitted less desirable objects.

Until the mid-18th century carpets were mostly used on walls and tables. Carpets (fixed) and rugs (movable) were not commonly used on the floor in European interiors until later in the 18th century, with the opening of trade routes between Persia and Western Europe. Carpet weaving started in Wilton, Wiltshire in the 18th century.

Arthur Devis

Devis was most successful between 1748 and 1758. During the 1760s, Devis's success as a portrait painter diminished sharply and although he exhibited works at the new Free Society of Artists between 1761 and 1775 and in 1780, becoming its president in 1768, his style seemed old-fashioned compared to portraits by important contemporary artists such as Joshua Reynolds and Johann Zoffany. Art reviewers and observers like Horace Walpole were very critical of Devis's pictures.

During the 1770s and 1780s, he seems to have made his living by restoring pictures. His most prominent job, done between 1777 and 1778, was

restoring Sir James Thornhill's paintings in the Painted Hall in the old Royal Hospital for Seamen, Greenwich (now the Old Royal Naval College). Devis retired to Brighton in 1783 and died there in 1787 and is buried in the churchyard of St. Mary Paddington, London. Devis married Elizabeth Faulkner (1719–1788) at St Katharine's by the Tower, London in 1742 and they had twenty-two children, only six of whom survived past infancy. Two, Thomas Anthony Devis (1757–1810) and Arthur William Devis (1762–1822), became painters.

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Philip Mercier (1689-1760)
*The Music Party, Frederick, Prince of
Wales with his three Eldest Sisters,
Anne, Caroline and Amelia*
1733
Royal Collection, Windsor Castle



Philip Mercier (1689-1760), *The Music Party, Frederick, Prince of Wales with his three Eldest Sisters, Anne, Caroline and Amelia*, 1733, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle

Philip Mercier's **Frederick, Prince of Wales, with his Sisters** of **1733** offers one of the most revealing portraits of the Hanoverian court's cultural ambitions. Mercier, who served as Painter and Librarian to Frederick from **1728 to 1738**, positions the Prince at centre stage with his cello, whilst **Princess Anne** plays the harpsichord, **Princess Caroline** the mandora, and **Princess Amelia** reads Milton — a deliberate tribute to English literary culture. The interior setting is specific rather than idealised: the sconces supplied by **Benjamin Goodison** and **Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini's** painting of the sleeping Endymion remain in the Royal Collection today. Lord Hervey condemned Frederick's cello-playing in his **Memoirs** of 1737, comparing it to Nero's public performances and dismissing him as a "buffoon fiddler." Hervey's snobbery reveals the painting's subversive edge — Frederick was deliberately cultivating an image of cultivated, accessible royalty. Anne's harpsichord credentials were impeccable; she had studied

under **George Frideric Handel**. Amelia's pose mirrors Endymion behind her, making her a living embodiment of inspired leisure. The Princesses' plain, almost bourgeois dress reinforces this mood of domestic harmony — one that, in reality, was already beginning to fracture.

Notes

Philip (or Philippe) Mercier served as Painter and Librarian to Frederick, Prince of Wales, from 1728 until 1738. There are three versions of this celebrated image; the other two (Cliveden, National Trust and National Portrait Gallery) are set out of doors with the so-called 'Dutch House' at Kew where the princesses lived, in the background. Since the events depicted here make more sense indoors it is usually assumed that this is the first treatment of the theme, however the date of 1733 inscribed on the National Portrait Gallery version provides an acceptable dating for all three.

The Prince of Wales is shown playing the cello, accompanied by his sister Princess Anne (1709-59) at the harpsichord; Princess Caroline (1713-57) plays the mandora (a type of lute) and Amelia (1711-86) reads a volume of Milton's poems. The setting seems to be specific - the red brick back of a building in the background is certainly not an artist's impression of an ideal palace — but it is impossible to identify with certainty. The sconce to the right (one of a group supplied in 1733 by Benjamin Goodison, c.1700-67) and the painting of the sleeping Endymion on the wall (by Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini) are both accurately recorded and still in the Royal Collection.

The Princesses are dressed 'with an almost bourgeois sobriety', with 'closed gowns' fastened across the bodice, covering a white linen kerchief round the neck and wearing plain caps with lappets, one pinned up, one hanging down and the last fastened under the chin. The more formally dressed Frederick is given centre stage and yet the effect of the scene is one of informality, ensemble music-making and sibling harmony (something which in reality was starting to evaporate at this time).

English noblemen would have been unlikely to play the cello as well as Frederick or to be depicted engaged in the activity with such eagerness. Lord Hervey clearly found Frederick's playing undignified, likening it to Nero's

public performances on the lyre and recalling this royal 'fiddler once or twice a week during this whole summer at Kensington seated close to an open window of his apartment, with his violoncello between his legs, singing French and Italian songs to his own playing for an hour or two together, whilst his audience was composed of all the underling servants and rabble of the palace.' Hervey concludes by asking 'how much does such a buffoon fiddler debase the title of a Prince of Wales' (Memoirs, 1737). Princess Anne had been taught by George Frederic Handel (1685-1759); her harpsichord playing was by all accounts worthy of her master and nobody at this date would have thought that playing or singing debased the title of Princess Royal.

If the musical application seems rather Germanic, there is a tribute here to English culture typical of Frederick, Prince of Wales: Amelia reads from Milton, adopting a listening pose which recalls that of the inspired Endymion on the wall behind; she is like a personification of the pleasure of the scene as she smile gently at the viewer.

The Eccentric #1

The eccentricity of playing the cello was nothing compared with some other English aristocratic eccentrics.

Background: many different social ranks commissioned conversation pieces. Some were middle class professionals who were wealthy through their business dealing and lived in towns. The gentry owned land and were typically the squire of a rural area. At the top were a small number of peers headed up by royalty. The peers typically had vast estates and were few in number. In 1707 there were only 168 English peers and 16 Scottish peers in the House of Lords. In descending order, the peer's titles are Duke, Marquess, Earl, Viscount and Baron. They often had the wealth and the time to pursue their desires however ludicrous they might be and however time-consuming; many were what could politely be called eccentric.

For example, Francis Henry Egerton, 8th Earl of Bridgewater preferred dogs to people. He had no time for women, and he declared that dogs were better behaved than gentlemen. The dogs ate with him every day. The dining table would be laid for twelve and the dogs led in, each with a clean, white napkin around their necks. Servants would serve them off silver dishes, one servant to each dog. Boots were his other obsession. He wore a new pair every day and

at night he ranged them round his walls and used them as a calendar.

References

Text adapted from *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of fashionable life*, London, 2009, Royal Collection website



Charles Philips (1703-1747)
*Frederick, Prince of Wales, with
 Members of 'La Table Ronde'*
 1732
 Royal Collection, Kew Palace

Charles Philips (1703-1747), *Frederick, Prince of Wales, with Members of 'La Table Ronde'*, 1732, Royal Collection, Kew Palace

This painting, by **Charles Philips**, presents **Frederick, Prince of Wales** as King Arthur presiding over a version of 'La Table Ronde' — a club recorded in a **Carlton House inventory of 1816** and otherwise unattested. Philips, son of a portrait painter and known for bright colouring and uncluttered directness, produced two such works now in the Royal Collection, both acquired by **George IV**, each documenting a club of which no other record survives. The composition enacts club democracy with precision: Frederick sits centrally beneath carved **Prince of Wales feathers**, yet not at the head of a table that has no head. No servants appear because the knights serve each other as the punchbowl circulates. Inscriptions — 'Interruption', 'Orders and Constitution' — strike the jocular-solemnity of the occasion. The setting is almost certainly an imaginary hunting lodge rather than the White House at Kew: the **Doric** columns, animal skulls in the metopes, and circular hunting horns suit a masculine sporting fantasy rather than any documented interior. The hunting uniform worn throughout was

Frederick's own design, recorded in **1729** as blue trimmed with gold, and widely imitated. It signals allegiance rather than service — an ingenious inversion of livery that blurred the boundary between a prince and his companions.

Notes

The painting above the fireplace of Princess Anne is by Philip Mercier but this painting is by Charles Philips.

This is one of two paintings in the Royal Collection, both now ascribed to Philips and both acquired by George IV, which document the existence of clubs of which there is no other surviving record. This painting was described in a Carlton House inventory of 1816 as 'The late Prince of Wales, with the members of 'La Table Ronde'. The other was the 'Henry Fifth Club'.

In so far as it is possible to characterise a club from its name, both of those recorded in Philips's paintings appear to be versions of 'Liberty Hall'. In The Henry the Fifth Club or 'The Gang' Frederick casts himself as a previous Prince of Wales, the mad-cap Prince Hal, with his disreputable boon companions before becoming the legendary hero-king Henry V, leading another 'band of brothers' to victory.

In this painting Frederick is depicted as King Arthur meeting on terms of equality with his Knights of the Round Table. He sits centrally, under some imposing voussoirs and a carved version of the Prince of Wales feathers, but not at the head of a table which can have no head; no servants are seen because the knights serves each other as the punchbowl circulates; none wears a hat. Even the inscriptions — 'Interruption' written under the man in the centre foreground who has overturned his chair and spilt his wine, 'Orders and Constitution' on the paper held by the man next to him — suggests the jocular-solemnity of club democracy.

There are three bowls of punch and four bottles of sherry and one close has tipped over and is spilling its contents on the floor.

The hunting uniform worn here, complete with boots and spurs, was designed by Frederick and seems to have caught on: a royal page described it in 1729, as 'blue, trimmed with gold, and faced and lined with red. The Prince of Wales, Princess Anne, the Duke of Cumberland, Princess Mary, and

Princess Louisa wear the same, and looked charming pretty in them. . . a world of gentlemen have had the ambition to follow his Royal Highness's fashion.' Such a fashion is an interesting variation on livery - uniform specific to a household and worn only by servants - and seems designed to express allegiance (perhaps reciprocal) rather than service. The same hunting uniform is worn by Princess Anne in the painting over the fireplace (from an original by Mercier). The idea of women sporting such masculine riding gear was not universally approved at this time:

'The Model of this Amazonian Hunting-habit for Ladies, was, as I take it, first imported from France, and well enough expresses the Gayety of a People who are taught to do any thing so it be with an Assurance; but I cannot help thinking that it fits awkwardly yet on our English Modesty. The Petticoat is a kind of Incumbrance upon it; and if the Amazons should think fit to go in this Plunder of our Sex's Ornaments, they ought to add to their Spoils, and complete their Triumph over us, by wearing the Breeches.' (Richard Steele, Spectator No 104, 29th June 1711)

This painting is often said to depict the interior of Frederick's villa, the White House at Kew. The room here is clearly lit by a Venetian Window (that is of straight-arched form), yet no such window occurred at the White House. It is most likely that this is an imaginary hunting lodge, with Doric columns appropriate for such a manly sport, and with every available space for decoration bearing some symbol of the chase: animal skulls and circular hunting horns in the metopes of the frieze, hanging trophies of the hunt between the columns, and more hunting horns in the decoration between the capitals.

Charles Philips was the son of a portrait painter and was born in London. His early portraits received great encouragement and their naïve charm attracted the nobility as patrons. His earliest conversation pieces are outside but he later painted the 7th Duke of Somerset and the Duchess of Portland in sumptuous Baroque interiors. He is known for his bright colouring and uncluttered directness. During the 1730s his conversation pieces became more complex and the number of sitters increased. In 1737 the Prince and Princess of Wales sat for full-length portraits inspired by the decorative portraits of Philip Mercier but they appear coarse in comparison. He died prematurely aged 44.

Eccentric #2

Seeing so many of the nobility reminds me of another eccentric. A few years earlier during the reign of Queen Anne, Lord Cornbury, the 3rd Earl of Clarendon (1661-1723) was appointed as the Queen's representative in New York. He took it seriously and as he represented a woman he decided to dress as woman. He spent so much on the finest women's clothes his wife was reduced to stealing his clothes. He continued to dress as a woman on his return to England in 1708 but remained a favourite of the Queen. The word eccentric may be too polite as from contemporary reports he was an imbecile and was described as profligate, corrupt, degenerate, perverted, a wastrel and a thief. He died in obscurity and debt but was buried in Westminster Abbey and by his daughter has many descendants today including Sarah, Duchess of York (née Ferguson, former wife of Prince Andrew).

ReferencesThe Conversation Piece: Scenes of fashionable life, London, 2009
<http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/british-eccentrics/>



Attributed to Joseph Nickolls (active 1726–1755)

St James's Park and the Mall

after 1745

Royal Collection

Attributed to Joseph Nickolls (active 1726–1755), St James's Park and the Mall, after 1745, Royal Collection

This snapshot of **St James's Park**, painted around **1745**, condenses the entire social theatre of Georgian London into a single promenade. **Frederick, Prince of Wales**, identifiable by his Garter star, converses with a fellow **Knight of the Garter** — an order capped at twenty-four members — directly in front of the gate to his own garden at **Carlton House**. His ease among the public expressed either genuine common touch or calculated political charm. Behind the figures, **Westminster Abbey's** twin western towers, completed that same year by **Nicholas Hawksmoor**, anchor the skyline above Whitehall Palace. The Mall's surface of crushed cockle shells recalls its origins as a **pall-mall** court, giving the road — and eventually shopping malls worldwide — its name. A milk bar in the lower left served fresh cow's milk at a penny a mug, as **P.-J. Grosley** recorded in 1772. The crowd is meticulously observed: Highland officers in government tartan — legal only for serving soldiers, though worn in protest at the **Duke of Cumberland's** brutality — stride past a well-dressed Black woman, priests, a Middle-

Eastern elder, and soldiers from three regiments. As **César de Saussure** noted, people came here to see, to be seen, and to seek their fortunes.

Notes

Centre right is Frederick, Prince of Wales, with his friends, wearing the garter star on his blue jacket and a hat. He is talking to his friend who also wears the Order of the Garter. It is the highest order of chivalry and there are never more than 24 members or Companions. The entrance to the Prince's garden at Carlton House is just behind us.

Whitehall Palace and Westminster Abbey are visible in the background. The abbey's two western towers had just been completed in 1745 by Nicholas Hawksmoor.

On the left is the Park's milk bar with cows to supply the milk. The British were served with all the 'cleanliness peculiar to the English, in little mugs at a penny a mug'

An amorous couple draws disapproving glances.

A woman is tying her stocking shielded by the skirt of another woman.

The hoops of another ladies skirt have flipped up as she sat. Before the Regency period women did not wear knickers as they wore multiple layers of warm clothing. It did not billow up but sitting on a hoop was always a danger. As fabrics became thinner during the Regency period a pair of drawers were worn, one for each leg and tied at the waist.

A man is relieving himself over a fence.

A woman is scared by a cow that suddenly appears as another cow is driven across the grass by a woman with a stick.

A man's head is turned by a passing beauty.

There is a well-dressed black woman in front of a sailor who is presumably her husband.

And there are soldiers and sailors from many regiments including highlanders. Wearing tartan was illegal except for British soldiers serving in Highland regiments. Sporting tartan was a form of protest against the brutality of the Duke of Cumberland's suppression of the Highlanders.

There are two priests in black talking.

There is even a well-dressed Middle-Eastern gentleman instructing a younger man.

The surface is made from crushed cockle shells which were previously used for a game like croquet called pall-mall, which is why the road is called the Mall. Roads with a similar name exist in many cities (Paris, Hamburg, Geneva, Utrecht) and are long and straight and so often developed in shopping areas which is why they are called shopping malls in America today. Others became shady promenades also called malls today.

Notes

Royal Collection website: St James's Park was laid out by Charles II in the formal French style with avenues of trees and a long rectangular canal. This scene is viewed looking back towards Whitehall Palace down the oblique avenue of trees. Westminster Abbey is visible in the distance including Hawksmoor's façade towers completed in 1745. To the right of this painting is the quadruple avenue of trees with a wide aperture down the middle, containing a surface of crushed cockle-shells. This was originally created (though at this date no longer used) for a game resembling croquet, called pall-mall, which was why this road was called 'the Mall', a name it retains today.

This royal park was kept open for the public, though chairs, horses and carriages were forbidden except by special permission of the King. It became a favourite resort for all fashionable (and not so fashionable) society, the Mall in particular being a place to be seen in the eighteenth-century London equivalent of the passeggiata. According to a French visitor:

'Society comes to walk here [along the Mall] on fine, warm days, from seven to ten in the evening, and in winter from one to three o'clock . . . the park is so crowded at times that you cannot help touching your neighbour. Some people come to see, some to be seen, and others to seek their fortunes; for many priestesses of Venus are abroad . . . all on the look out for adventures.' (César de Saussure, Letters from London, 1725-30)

Other accounts tell of cows and deer in the fields around the park, while a visitor in 1765 especially appreciated the availability of udder-fresh cow's milk 'served with all the cleanliness peculiar to the English, in little mugs at a penny a mug' (P.-J. Grosley, A Tour of London, 1772) and seen here in the lower left-hand corner.

The purpose of an image like this is people-watching: contemporaries would clearly have recognised familiar scenes (like the milk-bar) and recognisable

types, within the extraordinary variety of the London crowd. The low-life characters are kept somewhat to the periphery of the image: the woman pulling up her stocking on the left foreground and the suckling mother on the right. Three different regiments are represented: two soldiers from a 'Grenadier Company' of a Guards or Line regiment with their high mitres chat in the centre background; two Hungarian Officers, the one in scarlet probably a Nádasdy Hussar, appear at the lower left — Austria was Britain's ally during the war of the Austrian Succession (1740-48); two Highland Officers in government tartan stride across the centre just in front of a foot-soldier. Wearing tartan at this time was outlawed for all except men like these, serving in Highland regiments in the British Army, though disgust at the brutality of the Duke of Cumberland, made sporting tartan a fashionable badge of protest at this time. Immediately behind the Scottish soldiers is a sailor, talking to a friend while a well-dressed black woman, presumably his wife walks in front. Two priests in black walk in the centre right, while further to the right an exotic-looking robed and bearded middle-eastern elder instructs a younger man. Otherwise, the Mall itself is given over to the beau monde, dressed in the height of fashion and saluting each other with elaborate grace and courtesy.

This group is dominated by the clearly-identifiable figure of Frederick, Prince of Wales, speaking to a fellow Garter Knight in the centre of the composition. Immediately behind the viewpoint of the picture was the gate leading to the Prince's garden at Carlton House, so he is literally on his own doorstep. Royalty had mingled with the public in this setting at least since the time of Charles II, but Frederick's presence here is a perfect expression of his common touch - or his nauseating habit of ingratiating himself depending upon your point of view.

(Text adapted from *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of fashionable life*, London, 2009")



George Stubbs (1724–1806)
*Captain Samuel Sharpe Pocklington
 with His Wife, Pleasance, and
 possibly His Sister, Frances*
 1769
 National Gallery of Art, Washington

George Stubbs (1724–1806), *Captain Samuel Sharpe Pocklington with His Wife, Pleasance, and possibly His Sister, Frances*, 1769, National Gallery of Art, Washington

The conversation piece tradition frames Stubbs not merely as a sporting painter but as a rigorous anatomist who happened to work in oils. Born in Liverpool to a leatherworker, **George Stubbs** spent eighteen months from **1756** dissecting horses in a Lincolnshire farmhouse, assisted by his common-law wife Mary Spencer, before publishing *‘The Anatomy of the Horse’* in **1766** — eighteen engraved plates drawn entirely from his own dissections. Aristocratic patrons recognised immediately that his equine anatomy surpassed his rivals', and his reputation was secured. This canvas, painted to celebrate the **1769** marriage of **Captain Samuel Sharpe** to **Pleasance Pocklington**, heiress of Chelsworth Hall, Suffolk, shows Stubbs at his most characteristic. The captain retired from the Scots Guard that same year and adopted his wife's family name. The bride in her wedding gown offers a bouquet to her husband's horse — the animal rendered without artificial sentiment, accurately and directly. The lake's

atmospheric haze reveals genuine meteorological observation, and the oak tree, an archetypal specimen, recurs across Stubbs' conversation pieces as a compositional anchor. The Royal Academy nonetheless classified him as a sporting painter and denied him membership — a judgement that tells us more about **eighteenth-century** institutional prejudice than about the depth of Stubbs' achievement.

Notes

National Gallery of Art website:

George Stubbs, one of Europe's most important painters of animal subjects, was virtually self-taught as a zoologist, botanist, painter, and engraver. Born in Liverpool, the son of a leatherworker, he embarked on a career as a portraitist and became lecturer on human and animal anatomy at York County Hospital. In 1754, he visited Italy 'to convince himself that nature was and is always superior to art whether Greek or Roman'. As much a scientist as an artist, in 1756 he rented a farmhouse in Lincolnshire, and spent 18 months dissecting horses, assisted by his common-law wife, Mary Spencer. He moved to London in about 1759 and in 1766 after working in the morning and evening for six years on the 18 plates he published *The Anatomy of the Horse*, illustrated from his own dissections. Aristocratic patrons recognised that his paintings of horses were more accurate than his rivals and his career was secure. He also experimented with Josiah Wedgwood in painting with enamels on ceramic plaques but these were less successful. He is known for his animal paintings and for his conversation pieces.

This canvas celebrates the marriage in 1769 of Captain Samuel Sharpe to Pleasance Pocklington, heiress of Chelsworth Hall, Suffolk. (The captain retired from the Scots Guard in the same year and adopted his wealthy wife's family name.) The bride in her wedding gown offers a bouquet to her husband's horse. The other woman may be Frances, the captain's unmarried sister.

Typical of Stubbs' straightforward, scientific approach, the horse is rendered accurately, without artificial sentiment. The lake's haze demonstrates Stubbs' understanding of weather, and the majestic oak tree is an archetypal specimen that appears in his other conversation pieces.

During his lifetime, George Stubbs was famous for his paintings of domestic

and exotic animals, and was thought to have produced the most anatomically precise images of horses. Stubbs was an avid student of anatomy, having contributed illustrations to a treatise on midwifery and his own publication *The Anatomy of the Horse* in 1766—a hugely influential volume among naturalists and artists alike. Though he painted genre scenes, landscapes, and history paintings with less success, Stubbs was characterized as a sporting painter and so denied membership to the Royal Academy. Few of his paintings survive undamaged because Stubbs painted with thin and diluted oils.

Eccentric #3

The water reminds me of another eccentric. Matthew Robinson, 2nd Baron Rokeby (1713-1800) who became a Fellow of the Royal Society when he was 33 but decided in later life to spend as much time as possible in water. He spent hours in the sea off the Kent beaches and sometimes had to be resuscitated by his servants. As he got older he had a swimming pool built at his home Mount Morris near Hythe so he could spend nearly all his life floating in the water. He had drinking fountains built everywhere and drank great quantities every day. If he saw anyone else drink from his fountains he gave them half a crown. His delight was to let his estate run to seed to show his repugnance for all forms of artificiality. He never heated his house, ate raw meat, never touched bread, refused to see any doctors yet lived to be 88.



George Stubbs (1724-1806)
Wedgwood Family
1780
Oil on panel
121.5 x 184 cm
Wedgwood Museum

George Stubbs (1724-1806), *Wedgwood Family*, 1780, 121.5 x 184 cm, Wedgwood Museum

George Stubbs arrived at **Etruria Hall** in July **1780**, staying several months as guest of the **Wedgwood family**. By then, Stubbs's reputation rested firmly on his **1766** **Anatomy of the Horse**, which established him as Britain's foremost painter of horses. His interest in unconventional painting surfaces had already drawn him into collaboration with **Josiah Wedgwood I** and partner Thomas Bentley, who supplied ceramic plaques coated with special enamel colours. Wedgwood wrote to Bentley in 1779 of furnishing Stubbs "with the means of adding immortality to his excellent pencil." During his stay, Stubbs produced this oil-on-panel group portrait, two bas-reliefs, and twin ceramic portraits of Josiah and his wife Sarah. The painting shows the family in the grounds of Etruria Hall, with a distant view towards **Burslem**, where Josiah was born in **1730**, the eleventh child of a potter. Smallpox had weakened his knee in childhood, ending his work at the wheel and redirecting his talents toward design and manufacture. The Etruria Works he built here ran for 180 years and anchored a dynasty

whose descendants include **Charles Darwin** and composer Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Notes

This is the Wedgwood family in the park of their home, Etruria Hall.

Wedgwood Museum

George Stubbs was considered to be the greatest British painter of horses by the time his *Anatomy of the Horse* was published in 1766. He became interested in painting on various substances, and as a result he came to the attention of Josiah Wedgwood I's partner, Thomas Bentley.

Wedgwood then set about the task of providing ceramic plaques for Stubbs to paint on using special enamel colours. Wedgwood wrote to Bentley in 1779 saying – "When you see Mr Stubbs (sic) pray tell him how hard I have been labouring to furnish him with the means of adding immortality to his excellent pencil". At the time the paintings were viewed by the public with disapproval, with most of them remaining unsold at the time of Stubbs' death. Nowadays the paintings are highly prized.

In July 1780 Stubbs visited the Wedgwood family, staying at Etruria Hall for several months. During this time he modelled two bas-reliefs for Wedgwood, 'The Frightened Horse' and 'The Fall of Phaeton'. He also produced the Wedgwood family painting in oil on (wood) panel, which featured Josiah I, his wife Sarah, and their seven surviving children in the grounds of Etruria Hall, as well as producing twin portraits of Josiah and Sarah which were painted on ceramic plaques.

On horseback, from left to right, we see Thomas, aged 9, Susanna, aged 15, Josiah II and John. In the foreground is Mary Anne, aged 2, sitting in the carriage, then Sarah and Catherine and their parents Sally and Josiah sitting under the tree. There is a distant view to Burslem to the right. Josiah was born in Burslem, Staffordshire the eleventh and last child. He became a skilled potter when a child but smallpox weakened his knee and he could not work the potter's wheel so he took up design. He leased his first factory, the Ivy Works, in Burslem.

As a leading industrialist, Wedgwood was a major backer of the Trent and Mersey Canal dug between the River Trent and River Mersey, during which

time he became friends with Erasmus Darwin. Later in the 1770s, his growing business caused him to move from the smaller Ivy Works to the newly built Etruria Works, which would run for 180 years. The factory was so-named after the Etruria district of Italy, where black porcelain dating to Etruscan times was being excavated. He combined experiments in his art and in the technique of mass production with an interest in improved roads, canals, schools and living conditions. At Etruria, he even built a village for his workers. Not long after the new works opened, continuing trouble with his smallpox-afflicted knee made necessary the amputation of his right leg. In 1780, his long-time business partner Thomas Bentley died, and Wedgwood turned to Erasmus Darwin for help in running the business. As a result of the close association that grew up between the Wedgwood and Darwin families.

The Darwin-Wedgwood family includes 10 Fellows of the Royal Society and several artists, poets and musicians including Ralph Vaughan Williams. The family was founded by Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795) a friend of Erasmus Darwin. Josiah's favourite daughter, Susannah (1765-1817, 'Sukey') married Erasmus's son Robert Darwin and one of their children was Charles Darwin who married Josiah's granddaughter, Emma, daughter of Josiah II, who ran the family firm, became an MP and was a staunch abolitionist. Josiah II gave Samuel Taylor Coleridge a lifetime annuity of £150 on the condition that he discontinued his career in the ministry and devoted his life to poetry.



Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792)
The Honourable Henry Fane (1739–1802) with Inigo Jones and Charles Blair

1761–66

254.6 x 360.7 cm

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), *The Honourable Henry Fane (1739–1802) with Inigo Jones and Charles Blair*, 1761–66, 254.6 x 360.7 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Reynolds began this canvas in **1761**, completing it in **1766** — a five-year span that required each sitter to visit his Leicester Fields studio separately. At the centre sits **Henry Fane (1739–1802)**, second son of the eighth Earl of Westmorland, with a greyhound that Reynolds added during execution to reinforce Fane's prominence. To the left stands Inigo Jones, a descendant of the celebrated architect and neighbour at Fulbeck Lodge; to the right, Charles Blair, who had married Fane's younger sister Mary. Fane himself was a Treasury clerk, later member for the family's rotten borough of **Lyme Regis**, and hardly a figure of public distinction in 1761 — his twenty-first year. The composition is therefore less a record of achievement than a declaration of kinship and landed solidarity, rooted in **Fulbeck Hall**, Lincolnshire, where Fane's family had long been established. Technical analysis carried out during conservation in **2008–9** confirmed Reynolds's deliberate revisions: the greyhound was a late addition,

Blair's clothing was simplified, and Fane's was elaborated — all adjustments steering the eye to the principal sitter. Reynolds received **£200** for the commission, recorded in his receipt of February 1766.

Notes

Seated at the centre with a greyhound is the Honourable Henry Fane (1739-1802), second son of the eighth earl of Westmorland. To the left is Inigo Jones, a relative of the celebrated architect, and to the right Charles Blair, Fane's brother-in-law. Reynolds's largest and most impressive conversation piece, this canvas was begun in 1761 and completed in 1766. In the course of visits to London each of the three gentlemen would have sat for Reynolds separately, in his studio.

Henry Fane was a Clerk at HM Treasury but was described as 'very idle and careless and spending much time in the country'.

Henry Fane was the younger of two sons of Thomas Fane, who succeeded as eighth Earl of Westmorland in 1762 upon the death of his distant cousin. The Fanes had been long established at Fulbeck Hall, near Grantham, Lincolnshire, and Henry Fane was born at Fulbeck on May 4, 1739. Henry followed his father and elder brother to Parliament as member for Lyme Regis, the family's rotten borough, serving from 1772 until 1802. A clerk in the treasury from 1757 to 1762, he held the title of keeper of the king's private roads from 1772. On January 12, 1778, he married Anne Batson, daughter of a London banker, with whom he had fourteen children. Their family was raised at Fulbeck, which he inherited.

Fane is seated at centre here. The older man on the left is Inigo Jones, a descendant of the famous architect of that name, who lived in Bristol and at Fulbeck Lodge. The standing figure, Charles Blair, married Mary Fane, the younger of Henry's two sisters, at Fulbeck.

Henry Fane seems first to have sat for this portrait during his twenty-first year and, as it has not been possible to discover any achievements that he then had to his credit, we can only assume that the picture constitutes a particularly monumental celebration of traditional ties of family and friendship. The canvas was likely painted largely in 1761 and 1762, and was well under way by November 28, 1761, when the diarist Charles Brietzcke wrote that he went to "Mr. Reynolds in Leicester Field, [to] see Fane's &

Jones Pictures there." The artist referenced "Mr Fane Mr Jones & Mr Blair in one Picture" in his receipt of payment in the sum of £200, which is dated February 18, 1766. Two head-and-shoulders portraits by Reynolds, one of Fane (location unknown) and one of Blair (private collection), are connected with the commission.

In 1829 the condition of the painting was considered ruinous (see *Literary Gazette* 1829), but treatment in 2008–9 proved the work to be in much better state than had been anticipated. Technical analysis revealed changes made by Reynolds in the course of execution (the addition of the greyhound, the elaboration of Fane's clothing and the simplification of Blair's) that seem to be an attempt to emphasize Fane as the principal sitter.

Eccentric #4

Lord North married in September and spent his honeymoon in the Caribbean. When he returned with his new American wife to Burgholt House in England in October, he announced that he was going to bed. His wife was very surprised when he remained in bed for many days and was shocked to be told by a manservant that Lord North always stayed in bed from October 9th until March 22nd. A 25 foot dining table was brought into his bedchamber so that he could entertain people to dinner during these months. Lord North's explanation for this bizarre behaviour was that no Lord North had got out of bed from October to March since his ancestor had lost the American Colonies.

References

The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792)
Three Ladies Adorning a Term of Hymen
1773
233.7 x 290.8 cm
Tate, London

Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), *Three Ladies Adorning a Term of Hymen*, 1773, 233.7 x 290.8 cm, Tate, London

Joshua Reynolds founded his reputation on a single, ambitious argument: that British painting deserved a place alongside the great European traditions. As the first president of the **Royal Academy of Arts**, established in **1768**, he used both institutional authority and his own brush to make that case. His vehicle was the **Grand Manner** — a mode of portraiture that borrowed poses and gravitas from admired continental painters to elevate sitters beyond mere likeness into something approaching history painting. The result was occasionally controversial; critics levelled charges of plagiarism, and the borrowings were undeniable. ***Three Ladies Adorning a Term of Hymen***, painted for politician **Luke Gardiner** and depicting his fiancée Elizabeth Montgomery alongside her sisters Barbara and Anne, demonstrates the method at full stretch. The sisters, draped in classical dress, garland a statue of **Hymen**, god of marriage. Their movement through the composition generates a quiet sensuality that pure allegory alone could not achieve. Jonathan Jones, writing in **The Guardian** in **2000**,

identified the painting's defining quality precisely: Reynolds made aristocratic marriage feel like a sacred rite, and these women perform it as though nothing could be more natural.

Notes

The foundation of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768 gave British artists a new professional status and the means to distinguish themselves from their artisan colleagues. The Academy's first president, Joshua Reynolds, led the campaign to raise the profile and status of British art.

Reynolds developed the 'Grand Manner' style which aimed to elevate portraiture to the level of high art. This was largely to be achieved through classical allusion. In this portrait, the aristocratic Montgomery sisters, dressed in the classical style, pay homage to the Greek god of marriage. Their poses are taken directly from the work of admired old master painters, which lend them a certain dignity but also laid Reynolds open to charges of plagiarism.

Barbara, Elizabeth and Anne, the daughters of Sir William Montgomery of Macbie Hall, Peeblesshire, nicknamed the Irish Graces because they had grown up in Ireland. Elizabeth was engaged to the politician Luke Gardiner, who commissioned this picture.

The three ladies are caught in motion as they adorn the statue of Hymen, the Greek goddess of marriage. Reynolds makes them alluring but also modest. It is the sense of motion that brings the composition to life and brings a sense of sensuality. All three are young, beautiful and wealthy and the delicate strand of flowers serves to unite them together in a common cause.

'Reynolds's painting states this with a hauteur miles away from the intimacy and idiosyncrasy we associate with British portraits. Reynolds made the British aristocratic portrait monumental; he argued in his Discourses on Art for an anti-naturalist, authoritative kind of painting - a mere copier of nature can never produce anything great - and what this noble ideal amounted to in his own practice was a new kind of grand portrait, of which this is a glorious example. These women act as if it were perfectly natural for them to go and worship the god of marriage in the garden, where the stone Hymen recedes mysteriously into the shadows. They have even made a burnt offering on the altar; aristocratic marriage, the picture suggests, is a rite.' (Jones)

Eccentric #5

The Rothschild family built more than 40 villas in the 19th and 20th centuries. One in the south of France took seven years to build and the owner spent a total of three nights there. Tring Mansion in Hertfordshire was extended into a chateau by Lionel de Rothschild whose grandson Walter drove around the estate in a carriage pulled by six zebra. In the house lived his tame bear that used to slap women guests on the bottom. On one occasion the 2nd Baron de Rothschild gave an important political dinner for Lord Salisbury and when the twelve guests were seated at the table, they noticed that each had an empty chair beside them. Just before the meal, twelve immaculately dressed monkeys walked in and sat down in the empty seats.

References

Tate

Jonathan Jones, The Guardian, 14 October, 2000



Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792)
The Ladies Waldegrave
1780–81
143 x 168.3 cm
Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh

Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), *The Ladies Waldegrave*, 1780–81, 143 x 168.3 cm, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh

[Opening context from preceding section-header slide not provided, so beginning directly.] **Joshua Reynolds** painted **The Three Ladies Waldegrave** in **1781** for **Horace Walpole**, the author and antiquarian whose celebrated Gothic Revival villa, **Strawberry Hill**, built from **1749**, had already made him a household name among polite society. Walpole's passion for the medieval past finds an echo in Reynolds's composition: the three grandnieces are rendered with classical restraint, their pale muslin gowns and columned setting lending an antique gravity to what is, in essence, an advertisement of marriageable accomplishment. Laura winds silk thread onto a card fed from a skein held by Maria; Horatia works a **tambour frame** at right. The shared needlework task unites the trio into a single elegant rhythm — precisely the kind of compositional ingenuity that secured Reynolds's reputation as the defining English portraitist of his century. Exhibited at the **Royal Academy**, the portrait communicated the sisters' refinement, eligibility, and collective grace to exactly the audience that

mattered. Reynolds understood that chosen gesture reveals character whilst simultaneously serving pictorial structure, and here the two aims are inseparable.

Notes

This large-scale informal group portrait, or conversation piece, depicts the Waldegrave sisters, the grandnieces of the author and antiquarian Horace Walpole, who commissioned the work for his celebrated country house, Strawberry Hill. Strawberry Hill House is the earliest Gothic revival villa and was started in 1749. The villa became a marvel and was discussed by society and was regularly visited including a visit by the royal family.

Reynolds's gift for creating sophisticated compositions and rendering graceful gestures — at its height here — helped to establish him as one of the foremost English portraitists of the eighteenth century. The eldest sister, Laura, seated at centre, winds a card with silk thread from a skein held by her sister Maria, at left, while Horatia, the youngest, embroiders netting stretched in a tambour frame. An admirer (like Walpole) of the ancient past, Reynolds endows his sitters with a classical elegance emphasized by their pale muslin gowns and columned enclosure.

The sisters, all of whom were to marry in the following years, were single when the painting was commissioned. Their portrait, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1781, would have advertised their eligibility and desirability. Individually and collectively, the Waldegrave sisters embody contemporary ideals of feminine accomplishment, style, and beauty.

Reynolds was particularly skilled at choosing poses and actions which suggested a sitter's character and which also created a strong composition. Here, three sisters, the daughters of the 2nd Earl Waldegrave, are shown collaboratively working on a piece of needlework. The joint activity links the girls together. On the left, the eldest, Lady Charlotte, holds a skein of silk, which the middle sister, Lady Elizabeth, winds onto a card. On the right, the youngest, Lady Anna, works a tambour frame, using a hook to make lace on a taut net.

Eccentric #6

In 1770, at the age of 10 William Beckford inherited £1 million and several plantations in Jamaica. His income was £100,000 a year, an immense sum in

the 18th century. He became obsessed with building: large buildings with towers were his speciality. However he was an impatient man and couldn't wait to see his projects finished. In 1794 he decided to build a Gothic abbey at his Fonthill Estate in Wiltshire. He was so impatient that he couldn't wait for proper foundations to be dug: the abbey was built on foundations suitable for a much smaller building. 500 men were involved and he plied them with great quantities of beer, in the hope that they would work faster. After six years the magnificent abbey was complete with a spire 300 feet high. A gale blew up and the spire snapped in two. Beckford gave orders to start on a new tower immediately. Seven years later, the new tower was finished. Beckford lived in the abbey with just one servant, a Spanish dwarf but every day his dining table was laid for 12 and the cooks ordered to prepare food for twelve. Beckford had vowed he would eat his Christmas dinner in his new abbey's kitchen. He did, but as soon as he had finished the meal, the kitchen collapsed. Little remains of Fonthill Abbey today.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788)
*Lady Lloyd and Her Son, Richard
Savage Lloyd, of Hintlesham Hall,
Suffolk*
1745–46
63.5 x 76.2 cm
Yale Center for British Art

Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Lady Lloyd and Her Son, Richard Savage Lloyd, of Hintlesham Hall, Suffolk*, 1745–46, 63.5 x 76.2 cm, Yale Center for British Art

Building on Gainsborough's earliest Suffolk work, this portrait of **Lady Lloyd and her son Richard Savage Lloyd** of Hintlesham Hall dates from around **1750**, painted when Gainsborough was just eighteen. His clientele at this stage consisted largely of local merchants and squires — a practical necessity, since landscapes, his true passion, proved almost impossible to sell. Financial pressure was acute enough that he borrowed against the **£200 annuity** received by his wife **Margaret Burr**, illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Beaufort. The Lloyd family were among his most important early patrons. The father, **Sir Richard Lloyd (c.1697–1761)**, was knighted in **1745** after delivering a loyal address following the Jacobite rising known as the '**Forty-Five**', which ended at the **Battle of Culloden**. That same year, the elderly Countess of Winchelsea died, leaving Lloyd her entire estate — wealth that financed his parliamentary career and the purchase of **Hintlesham Hall** near Ipswich in 1747. The portrait itself shows the limitations of a

teenage hand; within a few years Gainsborough's technique would advance considerably, reflecting both his maturing eye and the demands of an increasingly ambitious clientele.

Notes

You have already seen this painting but I am showing it again as the earliest paintings by Gainsborough were conversation pieces of local Suffolk families. He painted this when he was 18.

Notes

This is a very early portrait and within a few years his style had improved enormously.

This was painted after he had moved to London but he frequently travelled to and from his home in Suffolk.

Lady Lloyd and her son, Richard Savage Lloyd, of Hintlesham Hall, Suffolk – at the time, his clientele included mainly local merchants and squires.

He found it difficult to sell his landscapes and switched to portraits of local merchants but had to borrow against his wife's annuity (Margaret Burr was the illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Beaufort and received an annuity of £200).

The father, Sir Richard Lloyd (?1697-1761) was an early patron of Gainsborough and this is the earliest portrait he painted of the family. The father was knighted in 1745 following a loyal address he gave after the Jacobite uprising of 1745 called the 'Forty-Five' after its defeat at the Battle of Culloden. Also, in 1745 the 90-year old dowager Countess of Winchelsea died inexplicably leaving him her entire estate. This supported him in Parliament and enabled him to buy Hintlesham Hall, near Ipswich in 1747.

References

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography



Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788)
Mr and Mrs Andrews
c. 1750
69.08 x 119.04 cm
National Gallery

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), Mr and Mrs Andrews, c. 1750,
69.08 x 119.04 cm, National Gallery

Having explored the broader tradition of outdoor conversation pieces, we can now see precisely how radical Gainsborough's intervention was. **Thomas Gainsborough** painted **Mr and Mrs Andrews** around **1748–1750**, shortly after returning from London to his native Suffolk and close to the **November 1748 marriage** of **Robert Andrews** of the Auberies and **Frances Carter** of Ballingdon House, near Sudbury. The Andrews estate sat just two miles from Gainsborough's own home, a proximity that shaped the commission profoundly. The work operates simultaneously as a double portrait and a **conversation piece**, yet departs sharply from convention. Where contemporaries such as **Arthur Devis** placed figures against generalised pastoral backdrops, Gainsborough renders a specific, working agricultural landscape with documentary precision — harvested wheat sheaves, open Suffolk skies, a managed estate that asserts ownership as much as affection. The unusual compositional decision to push the couple to one side and give the land equal weight strongly indicates that Andrews himself had

a hand in specifying the arrangement. He wanted his acres acknowledged, not merely implied. The result is a portrait that is also a statement of **Georgian landownership**, grounded in a particular place at a particular moment.

Notes

This masterpiece of Gainsborough's early years can be seen as a double portrait or as a conversation piece. It was painted after his return home from London to Suffolk in 1748, soon after the marriage of Robert Andrews of the Auberies and Frances Carter of Ballingdon House, near Sudbury, in November of that year. The estate was two miles from Gainsborough's home and the unusual composition that combines a portrait with a landscape suggests the couple may have had a role in specifying it.

Having seen many other outdoor conversation pieces we can now see how different and how radical Gainsborough's painting was.

References

Web Gallery of Art



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788)
Mr and Mrs William Hallett ('The Morning Walk')
1785
236 x 179 cm
National Gallery, London

Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), Mr and Mrs William Hallett ('The Morning Walk'), 1785, 236 x 179 cm, National Gallery, London

Thomas Gainsborough painted **The Morning Walk** in **1785**, just before William Hallett and Elizabeth Stephen — both aged 21 — wed that summer. The commission is inseparable from that biographical moment: the ivory silk dress Elizabeth wears is almost certainly her wedding gown, its waist caught with a black silk band above a frilled muslin kerchief trimmed in grape-green ribbon. William's studied carelessness — jacket undone, one hand tucked inside — is a deliberate performance of aristocratic ease, a pose recurring across **18th-century** conversation pieces. His feet are positioned at ninety degrees, the precise stance expected of a gentleman. Together, the couple's dress signals wealth and social standing through a format that functioned, above all, as fashionable self-presentation. What elevates this beyond portraiture convention is **Gainsborough's** late handling of paint. His light, feathery brushstrokes dissolve the boundary between sitters and setting: William's powdered hair and Elizabeth's gauzy shawl drift into the woodland behind them. The **National Gallery** rightly

emphasises how ostrich feathers and **silk velvet** read as naturally as foliage here. Gainsborough constructs a world in which social artifice and the natural landscape become, visually, the same thing.

Notes

The Halletts are shown in their finest clothes taking a stroll through a woodland landscape with their dog. This format and style of painting was a fashionable status symbol. The couple, William Hallett and Elizabeth Stephen, were both 21 and due to be married that summer, shortly after the painting was completed.

William is wearing a black, silk velvet frock-suit and his apparent carelessness is a studied pose. The undone jacket and with one hand tucked into it is a stance seen in many fashionable 18th-century conversation pieces. His feet are at ninety degrees in the pose expected of a gentleman. Elizabeth is in a dress of ivory silk - perhaps her wedding dress - caught at the waist with a black silk band. A frilled muslin kerchief covers her breast, with a knot of grape-green ribbon under it.

The light, feathery brushstrokes used to describe the landscape are typical of Gainsborough's late style. William's hair and Elizabeth's gauzy shawl almost blend into the landscape they walk through. Gainsborough creates an enchanted world where even the ostrich feathers and powdered wigs look as natural as the foliage and woods around them.

References

The National Gallery



Johann Zoffany (1733–1810)
*Self-portrait as David with the head
of Goliath*
1756
92.2 x 74.7 cm
National Gallery of Victoria

Johann Zoffany (1733–1810), *Self-portrait as David with the head of Goliath*, 1756, 92.2 x 74.7 cm, National Gallery of Victoria

This self-portrait introduces **Johann Zoffany (1733–1810)**, who became the leading painter of conversation pieces in eighteenth-century England. He was twenty-three when he painted it — already showing the technical assurance that would define his career. Born in Frankfurt, Zoffany trained as a sculptor under **Martin Speer** in Regensburg, where his father worked as a court architect. A visit to Rome in **1750** brought him under the influence of **Anton Raphael Mengs** and into the studio of **Agostino Masucci**. He arrived in London in 1760, having changed his name from Zauffaly, but poor English left him destitute. Work painting clock faces for the watchmaker **Stephen Rimbault** led, improbably, to an introduction to the actor-manager **David Garrick**, who became his first major patron. Success followed swiftly. Zoffany exhibited at the **Society of Artists in 1762**, joined the **Royal Academy in 1769**, and became a favourite of George III. His later years were restless: he worked in Florence, Vienna, and between 1783 and 1789 in Lucknow. Returning from India, he was shipwrecked near the Andaman Islands.

William Dalrymple notes drily that the survivors held a lottery whose loser was eaten — making Zoffany, in Dalrymple's words, the first and last Royal Academician to have become a cannibal.

Notes

Not a conversation piece but a self-portrait to enable me to introduce the best known painter of conversation pieces in the eighteenth century.

Johann Zoffany (1733–1810) was a German neoclassical painter, active mainly in England. In this painting he was 23.

Zoffany became the leading exponent of the conversation piece in England in the later 18th century. He was born in Frankfurt and was trained as a sculptor 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 the German painter Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779) while studying with Agostino Masucci (c. 1691-1758). With the aid of a dowry brought by his recent bride he travelled to London in 1760 and changed his name from Zauffaly. His poor English made it difficult to find work as a portrait painter. He was destitute and was introduced to a watchmaker called Stephen Rimbault to work painting clock faces. Rimbault introduced him to a minor portraitist who liked the clock faces and offered him £40 a year to paint drapery and figures. Through him Zoffany met the actor-manager David Garrick who became his first major patron. Zoffany became well-known and successful and he was at one time the favourite of George III and although they had their differences their relationship spanned 30 years.

He 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. He exhibited at the academy for the last time in 1800.

From 1783 to 1789 he worked in Lucknow, India and on his return to England he was shipwrecked off the Andaman Islands. The survivors held a lottery in which the loser (a sailor) was eaten. William Dalrymple thus describes Zoffany as having been 'the first and last Royal Academician to have become a cannibal'.

Eccentric #7

The eccentricity of the English nobility continued into the nineteenth century. William John Cavendish-Scott-Bentinck, the 5th Duke of Portland (1800-1879) for example, was so shy he banned people from his home, Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire. He decided to live underground and built enormous subterranean rooms connected by 15 miles of tunnels including one to take his coach to the local station underground where the coach with its curtained windows was lifted onto a railway carriage.



Johan Joseph Zoffany (1733–1810)
*David Garrick and his wife by his
 Temple to Shakespeare, Hampton*
 c. 1762
 129.5 x 154.9 cm
 Yale Center for British Art

Johan Joseph Zoffany (1733–1810), *David Garrick and his wife by his Temple to Shakespeare, Hampton*, c. 1762, 129.5 x 154.9 cm, Yale Center for British Art

David Garrick (1717–1779) transformed British theatre not merely through performance but through institutional vision. As manager of **Drury Lane** for 29 years, he replaced the prevailing bombastic declamatory style with a naturalistic approach, reformed audience behaviour, and imposed consistency across set design, costume, and special effects — changes that reshaped European theatre. In **1749** he married **Eva Marie Veigel (1724–1822)**, a German dancer who had emigrated to London three years earlier. Their union, childless but famously devoted, is preserved in several portraits. By **1754** Garrick's wealth allowed him to purchase what became **Garrick's Villa** at Hampton, where he built a **Temple to Shakespeare** the following year to house his memorabilia collection. **Johann Zoffany's** conversation piece shows the couple beside that Temple, with the **Thames** stretching behind them. The ferry visible in the scene has operated since 1514. The island in the distance is Platts Eyot, and the church on

the horizon St Mary's, Walton-on-Thames, whose Norman nave dates from **1150**. The marshland beyond — **Moulsey Hurst** — was already one of England's oldest sporting venues, hosting organised cricket from 1723. This painting and its companion sold at Sotheby's to the Garrick Club for £6.8 million.

Notes

David Garrick (1717–1779) was an English actor, playwright, theatre manager and producer who influenced nearly all aspects of theatrical practice throughout the 18th century, and was a pupil and friend of Dr Samuel Johnson. He appeared in a number of amateur theatricals, and with his appearance in the title role of Shakespeare's Richard III, audiences and managers began to take notice.

He purchased a share of the Drury Lane theatre and managed it for the next 29 years, during which time it became one of the leading theatres in Europe. Three years after he retired he died and is buried in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

He introduced the modern realistic acting style that departed from the then current bombastic, declamatory style. He also slowly managed to reform audience behaviour and achieved consistency in set design, costumes and special effects.

He had a number of unsuccessful love affairs, including possibly fathering a son with Jane Green. He then met Eva Marie Veigel (1724–1822), a German dancer in opera choruses who emigrated to London in 1746. The pair married on 22 June 1749 and were preserved together in several portraits, including one by William Hogarth. The union was childless but happy, Garrick calling her 'the best of women and wives', and they were famously inseparable throughout their nearly 30 years of marriage. Garrick's increasing wealth enabled him purchase a palatial estate for Eva Marie and himself to live in, naming it Garrick's Villa, that he bought at Hampton in 1754. He also indulged his passion for Shakespeare by building a Temple to Shakespeare in 1755 on the riverside at Hampton to house his collection of memorabilia. This conversation piece by Zoffany shows Garrick with Eva alongside the Temple to Shakespeare on the Thames at Hampton.

The ferry we see has operated since 1514 and was opened to allow fishermen

from Hampton to cross to catch fish in the seasonally marshy and reed-laden Moulsey Hurst, The ferry was incorporated by statute making it one of the ten oldest companies in the UK and one of the 150 oldest in Europe. (The oldest company in the UK is The Bingley Arms in Yorkshire which was incorporated in 953). The island in the distance is Platts Eyot and the church on the horizon could be St Mary's Church, Walton-on-Thames (the five Norman pillars in the North nave date from 1150 and the tower from 1450).

This and the next painting were sold at Sotheby's recently to the Garrick Club for £6m (£6.8m including commission).

Molesey Hurst is one of England's oldest sporting venues and was used in the 18th century for cricket, prizefighting and other sports. In 1603, the year James VI became King of England he played the first game of golf in England on Molesey Hurst. It is one of the oldest locations where organised cricket was played in 1723. In the nineteenth century it became a horse racing track and has also been used for ballooning, sprinting and archery. In the eighteenth century:

1723 – the earliest known use of the site for cricket: Surrey v. London

1726 – mentioned in the London Evening Post dated Sat 27 August 1726, in the paper's first year of publication; it carried an advertisement for a single wicket match.

1733 – earliest known use of the site for an inter-county match when Surrey played Middlesex

May 1785 – James Sadler made a hot air balloon ascent near here, accompanied by a Member of Parliament, about a year after the success of the Montgolfier Brothers balloon

Autumn 1787 – a professional runner named Powell ran a mile in 4 minutes and 3 seconds at Moulsey Hurst in preparation for an attempt on the 4 minute mile

August 1795 – in a cricket match at Moulsey Hurst, John Tufton was dismissed leg before wicket (lbw) by John Wells; according to Arthur Haygarth it was the first time lbw had ever been recorded in a scorecard

1798 – a Mr Troward, a member of the Toxophilite Society, shot an arrow on a level piece of ground on Moulsey Hurst seventeen score, or 340 yards



Johann Zoffany (1733-1810)
*The Garden at Hampton House, with
 Mr and Mrs David Garrick taking tea*
 1762

Johann Zoffany (1733-1810), *The Garden at Hampton House, with Mr and Mrs David Garrick taking tea*, 1762

This painting offers a rare glimpse of **David Garrick** at leisure at his Thames-side villa, probably around **1762**, the date associated with Johann Zoffany's celebrated group portrait of the same scene. Garrick sits taking tea with his wife **Eva Maria** and Colonel George Bodens, while his brother **George Garrick (1723–1779)** fishes on the right — his rod pointing directly toward the recently completed **Hampton Court Bridge**. That first bridge, built **1752–53** under a parliamentary act secured by James Clarke, comprised seven wooden arches in Chinoiserie style. It was replaced in 1778, then again by E. T. Murray's iron structure in **1864–65**, before the present bridge — designed by **Sir Edwin Lutyens** and W. P. Robinson, echoing Wren's palace façade — opened in 1933. The weeping willows framing the scene are themselves historically significant: Garrick introduced **Salix babylonica** to English garden design, and the fashion spread nationally. **Capability Brown**, who advised on the villa's grounds and proposed the tunnel visible on the left, counts among the details that

make this image so instructive — a single view connecting theatrical celebrity, landscape history, and the long evolution of river infrastructure.

Notes

I include this for local interest as it shows Hurst field, Tagg's Island, the second seven-arched Hampton Court bridge and Hampton Court Palace.

Notes

David and Eva Maria Garrick sit at the table having tea. To the left is their friend Colonel George Bodens, a noted wit and behind them stands the butler Charles Hart. Around them are three much-loved King Charles spaniels and on the right Garrick's brother George (1723-1779) is fishing.

To the left there is a tunnel to Garrick's villa which was suggested by Capability Brown as an alternative to Garrick's idea of a bridge over the road, leading to Dr. Johnson's famous quip, 'David, David, what can't be over-done, may be under-done.'

The weeping willows (*Salix babylonica*) were prize specimens of a type originally brought from northern Syria between 1692 and 1730. The garden may have been laid out by Capability Brown, a friend of Garrick. Garrick was the first to use a weeping willow and the craze soon caught on and spread to gardens around the country. They may have been inspired by Psalm 137, 'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.'

George Garrick's fishing rod points at the new bridge completed nine years previously and the first bridge to be built at Hampton Court. The first bridge was built from 1752 until 1753 and opened in December that year, after a 1750 parliamentary bill agreed on the construction of a privately owned bridge by James Clarke. It had seven wooden arches and was built in the Chinoiserie design of the Willow pattern that was popular at the time, attested by two prints made in the year of its opening and the year after.

This bridge was replaced by a more sturdy eleven-arch wooden bridge in 1778. By 1840 this bridge had become dilapidated and the owner appealed to the Corporation of London to support reconstruction. Among their arguments were that since the bridge was built, the City had created Molesey Lock and Weir and as a consequence navigation through the bridge was

dangerous. The bridge was described at about this time as "crazy, hog-backed, inconvenient and obstructive of the navigation".

From 1864 to 1865 construction took place of the third bridge on the site, and the first to be built in stone. It was built to a design by E. T. Murray and commissioned by the bridge's owner Thomas Allan. The new bridge consisted of wrought iron lattice girders resting on four cast iron columns. The road approach was between battlemented brick walls. An illustrative fragment of these approach walls remains on the south bank immediately west of the bridge. The design was heavily criticised; it was described simply in 1911 by one Historic Gazetteer, the Victoria County Histories as "inartistic". A less diplomatic contemporary commentator called it "one of the ugliest bridges in England, and a flagrant eyesore and disfigurement both to the river and to Hampton Court." Despite the criticism, it proved extremely lucrative for Allen, earning him over £3,000 annually in tolls until he was bought out in 1876 for £48,048 by a joint committee of the Hampton and Molesey Local Boards and the Corporation of London.

The modern bridge is the fourth designed by the Surrey county engineer W. P. Robinson and the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens to reflect the style of the portions of Hampton Court Palace designed by Sir Christopher Wren. Construction began in 1930 and it opened on 3 July 1933.



Johann Zoffany (1733–1810)
Queen Charlotte with her Two Eldest Sons
 1764
 112.2 × 128.3 cm
 Royal Collection

Johann Zoffany (1733–1810), *Queen Charlotte with her Two Eldest Sons*, 1764, 112.2 × 128.3 cm, Royal Collection

By 1764, Johan Zoffany had secured the patronage of **George III** and **Queen Charlotte**, and this dressing-room scene rewards close attention. Set in the King's ground-floor apartments at Buckingham House — less redecorated than the Queen's own rooms, and retaining much of the **1702–5** building's character — the composition places Charlotte's dressing table directly before the central garden door. The resulting vistas, opening in every direction through a light-chequered enfilade, consciously invoke **Gerard Ter Borch**: the same glossy silk rendered almost as collage, the oblique corner view, the sitter's face repeated in profile in the mirror. The brightly lit interior passages owe an equal debt to **Pieter de Hooch**. Where Ter Borch's vanitas tradition treats beauty as transient — his extinguished candle signals as much — Zoffany inverts the moral entirely. The Father Time figure on the **Ferdinand Berthoud** clock bends to read exactly 2.30pm: the Princes have finished their dinner, governess **Lady Charlotte Finch** waits beyond the door, and the Queen will dine with the King at 4.00pm

precisely. Strict timekeeping signals an orderly household; maternal affection and ceremonial dress speak not to vanity but to duty. The empty chair, drum, and standard quietly invoke the absent King's authority.

Notes

By 1764, Zoffany's patrons were George III and Queen Charlotte.

The setting here is Buckingham House, but this time the King's apartments on the ground floor's garden façade; these were less redecorated and therefore preserved more of the character of the 1702-5 building. Zoffany has placed the Queen's dressing table directly in front of the back door at the centre of the garden façade — the glimpse of formal garden, the height of the aperture and the fenestration of the rooms visible beyond admit of no other explanation. This is clearly a very unlikely position for a dressing table, and suggests either that the Queen was temporarily occupying these rooms while her apartments above were being redecorated or that Zoffany has stage-managed the scene in order to achieve the effect of vistas opening in every direction. The character of the interior is more heterogeneous and in some cases old-fashioned than the other painting: dark-coloured panelling and door surrounds; pier glasses and table in the style of the 1730s.

There are a French clock by Ferdinand Berthoud, with a case designed by Charles Cressent following a model of the 1730s; Chinese figures; an unidentified overdoor (perhaps depicting Ulysses and Nausicaa) resembling the work of Francesco Zuccarelli; a lace cover for the dressing table, supplied by Priscilla MacEune in 1762 for £1,079 14s; and similarly modern silver gilt toilet set.

The image is a conscious tribute to the great names of Dutch genre painting, and in particular the work of Gerard Ter Borch, as can be seen by comparison with his *Lady at her Toilet* of c.1660 (Detroit Institute of Art, Michigan).

Zoffany has created the same miraculous effect of silk so glossy that it seems to be a collage of silver-paper; like Ter Borch he similarly takes an oblique view of the corner of a room with many other rich stuffs and precious objects; he even follows the same device of repeating the sitters face in profile in the mirror. The perspective of the enfilade, chequered with light, pays tribute to the brightly lit interiors of Pieter de Hooch or Emmanuel de Witte (c.1617-92).

The moral of Dutch seventeenth-century scenes of ladies dressing is that beauty is transient and that it is vanity to concern yourself with it; hence the extinguished candle on the table in Ter Borch's painting. Zoffany turns the moral around: time is carefully controlled. Father Time appears scythe-bearing on the clock, but he bends down to read the time which is exactly 2.30pm, which means that the Princes have finished their dinner (which since November 1764 they had taken at 2.00pm) and are visiting their mother, after she has dressed (a process which began at 1.00pm), while their governess waits in the room beyond. The Queen will dine with the King at exactly 4.00pm. The splendid and highly formal character of the Queen's dress would be regarded at this date not as a sign of vanity but of respect for custom and ceremony; strict time-keeping is the sign of an orderly mistress of a household; playing with children is clearly the action of a devoted and dutiful mother. Even the way in which the view opens onto a formal garden suggests an appreciation of fresh air and Nature which were becoming popular at this time.

In September 1764 Lady Charlotte Finch (1725-1813), the Princes' governess, in September 1764 ordered 'a Telemachus Dress for the Prince of Wales and a Turk's for Prince Frederick'; it is assumed that this is what they wear in this painting. This attire may be associated with a famous educational text of the period, *The Adventures of Telemachus, Son of Ulysses* (1699) by Francois Fénelon, which describes the son of Ulysses travelling round the Mediterranean (like his father) with his advisor, Mentor, and seeing examples of good and bad government. It was written as a scathing criticism of the French monarchy. It may be that the contrast of Turkish and classical costume is just fancy dress: the eighteenth-century equivalent of cowboys and indians. Certainly there is a humour in the way that Prince George holds the dog like a warrior with his charger. The empty chair at the left side of the painting, with drum and standard, is surely intended to suggest the person and manly inspiration of the absent King.

Both of Zoffany's images of the royal toddlers were private: neither was engraved or exhibited at the Society of Arts, though Zoffany must have wished to advertise such a prestigious commission; both seem to have been given to the elder Prince. Both paintings are examples of the artist's love of layered reality; of a confusion of real, reflected, painted, carved and

embroidered images of the world. In this dressing-room scene there is more than a suggestion that we may view the world with the eye of a child, lost in wonderment at the phantasmagoria of reality and reflection.

ReferencesThe Conversation Piece: Scenes of fashionable life, London, 2009



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

The **Sharp family** transformed their sailing barge **Apollo** into a floating concert hall, giving fortnightly performances on the Thames at Fulham from the **1750s** onwards. **Johann Zoffany** spent a full year painting each sitter individually, and the result is one of the most ambitious conversation pieces of the eighteenth century. **William Sharp (1729–1810)**, surgeon to **George III**, stands at the tiller, tricorn raised, wearing the distinctive Windsor uniform. His brothers complete the ensemble: **James Sharp** holds the serpent, ancestor of the tuba; Dr John Sharp has set his cello aside; and **Granville Sharp (1735–1813)** holds his flageolets, clarinet nearby. The three sisters — Elizabeth at the piano, Judith with music in hand, Frances with a theorbo — anchor the composition's centre. Granville's presence carries weight beyond the music. When William treated Jonathan Strong, a slave beaten nearly blind by his owner, it was Granville who pursued his freedom through the Lord Mayor's court, defeating a subsequent £200 damages claim and dedicating the remaining fifty years of his life to

abolition. Zoffany's image of the family at leisure therefore carries an unexpected moral charge: the same hands making music had begun dismantling **British slavery**.

Notes

Johann Zoffany was master of the conversation piece and this is a tour de force.

The Sharp family were living for a while on the Thames in a barge and would play music to entertain guests. Zoffany painted each person individually over a period of one year.

The remarkable Sharp family gave fortnightly concerts as an orchestra from the 1750s onwards. This conversation piece, one of Zoffany's masterpieces, commemorates the concerts they gave on board their sailing barge Apollo at Fulham.

The work was commissioned from Zoffany by William Sharp (1729-1810), surgeon to George III (although no documentary evidence confirms this). Sharp is seen standing at the tiller, hat raised, wearing the Windsor uniform with its distinctive red collar; his instruments are the French horns which rest on the piano.

Of his three brothers, Dr John Sharp is on the right and has laid his cello aside for the moment; Granville Sharp, the famous philanthropist and slavery abolitionist, holds his favoured flageolets in one hand, his clarinet being nearby on the piano; while James Sharp, an engineer, holds the serpent (ancestor of the tuba). The three Sharp sisters complete the orchestra: Elizabeth at the piano, Judith with music in hand and, above to the right, Frances with a theorbo (a type of lute with an extended neck and two peg boxes) or perhaps an angélique.

Sitters

William Sharp (1729-1810), Surgeon to George III, at the top on the tiller and waving his tricorn 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.



Johan Zoffany (1733-1810)
The Sayer Family of Richmond
 1781
 101.5 x 127 cm
 Private collection

Johan Zoffany (1733-1810), *The Sayer Family of Richmond*, 1781, 101.5 x 127 cm, Private collection

Robert Sayer was Zoffany's friend, business partner, and the leading publisher of engravings in late-1760s London — selling prints after Zoffany's portraits of **David Garrick**, **George III**, and Queen Charlotte, before becoming Britain's foremost cartographer by the 1780s. This portrait, painted around **1781**, shows Sayer with his second wife **Alice Longfield** and his son **James Sayer** beside their newly built Richmond home, with **Richmond Bridge** — completed 1777 and now the oldest surviving Thames crossing in Greater London — visible behind them. The commission celebrates Sayer's new wife and new house, yet Zoffany turns the occasion into a study in psychological tension. James stands tall in fashionable dress and polished buckled shoes; Sayer leans forward in a coat with brass buttons that reads as **1730s** style, his wide-brimmed hat equally old-fashioned. As David Wilson writes, for Zoffany facial expressions and material possessions acted as "important indices of behaviour and personal presentation." Alice, herself a widow who had lost both first husband and son, glances up at

her stepson with watchful expectancy. Only the dog meets the viewer's eye, with something between boredom and irritation — Zoffany's driest editorial comment on the whole uneasy gathering.

Notes

Robert Sayer was an old friend and business colleague of Zoffany. Sayer published and sold the engravings based on Zoffany's work. Sayer was the leading publisher of engravings in the late 1760 and Zoffany's prints of David Garrick were extremely popular. Sayer also sold engravings from Zoffany's portraits of George III and Queen Charlotte. He also sold maps and by the 1780s was the leading cartographer in London. His maps were used by the British Admiralty until 1820 and by merchant fleets all through the nineteenth century.

The picture shows Robert Sayer seated with his second wife Alice Longfield and his son James Sayer, the only surviving offspring from his first marriage. It embodies the usual message of inheritance and dynasty but combined with Zoffany's unique sense of humour. Zoffany can convey through a glance or the tilt of a head a deep physiological insight.

Here we see the new Mrs Sayer has put her book aside briefly to look up at her stepson as if about to speak to him. Her husband leans forward to listen to the conversation. In addition, the dog and the house add to the drama. Sayer commissioned the work to celebrate his new wife and his new house. Zoffany places him beside an oak tree dressed modestly and blending partly into the foliage behind him. The dog looks out with an expression between boredom and irritation and is the only one to look directly out at the viewer. Alice was a wealthy widow whose first husband died aged only 44 followed two years later by her 24 year-old son. The relationship with her new stepson is therefore important. The son, James, is 24 and stands tall and elegant and adopts the pose expected of a gentleman with his feet splayed at ninety degrees. He wears the latest smart clothes with polished buckled shoes in contrast with his father's relaxed look. It has been suggested that his old coat with its brass buttons was fashionable in the 1730s and 40s and the wig and wide-brimmed hat are similarly old-fashioned. Is Zoffany suggesting his friend Sayer is out-of-date with fashion compared with his trendy young son? Zoffany introduces physiological subtlety and humour by the expressions of

each person. Many interpretations are possible, for example, does the father have a sense of expectancy in his eyes or pride suggested by a restrained smile that expresses hope that he will be a deserving heir and form a good relationship with his wife? Or is there a slight note of concern in the pursed lips? His wife looks intently at James but there is a note of expectancy or is it wariness as she tries to gauge the reaction of her new son in advance.

As David Wilson wrote, for Zoffany 'facial expressions, mannerisms, personal eccentricities, social rituals and material possessions, acted as important indices of behaviour and personal presentation.'

The house has many of the windows apparently bricked up, perhaps it is Zoffany's joke regarding Sayer's meanness concerning paying windows tax. Windows tax had been introduced in 1696 but it had been increased to a variable rate that depended on the property's value in 1778. The house was built for Sayer between 1777 and 1781 and was later known as Cardigan House; it became part of the British Legion Poppy Factory and was demolished in 1970. At the end of the eighteenth century it was the principal residence of HRH the Duke of Clarence (the future King William IV) and briefly his elder brother George, Prince of Wales. The house was later visited by Queen Alexandra, widow of King Edward VII and by Queen Mary, consort of George V. Note that Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent's Birthday (exhibited 1819) is set further upstream in the grounds of Lansdowne House when Marquess Wellesley lent the house to Dowager Countess of Cardigan for the garden party to celebrate the birthday of the Prince on 12 August 1817.

The painting shows the earliest known depiction of Richmond Bridge by a well known artist. Richmond grew as a London 'resort' during the eighteenth century. Well known figures such as Joshua Reynolds and Johann Christian Bach built or acquired properties in the area leading to a construction boom and the development of Richmond Hill with its sweeping view of the Thames. Richmond Bridge was completed in 1777 and this enabled Twickenham to develop as it provided easy access to the courts of George III at the Old Palace at Kew. Richmond Bridge was the eighth and is now the oldest bridge over the Thames in Greater London.

Zoffany died in 1810 at Strand-on-the-Green and is buried in St Anne's Church, Kew.

The painting was deaccessioned by a major US museum and has been turned from 'ugly duckling' into a swan by David Wilson's well researched book Johan Zoffany RA and the Sayer Family of Richmond: A Masterpiece of Conversation (2014).

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17-08 ZOFFANY AND THE CONVERSATION PIECE

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Johan Zoffany,
The Sayer Family of
Richmond, detail,
1781

From Palma Vecchio's *Sacra conversazione* to Zoffany's intimate Thames-side groups, this talk traced the conversation piece across two centuries and multiple cultures. We followed its debt to Rubens and Watteau, watched Hogarth sharpen it into social comedy, and saw Devis, Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Stubbs each bend the format to different ends. Zoffany's arrival in London crystallised the genre's possibilities — domesticity, celebrity, and moral complexity held together within a single, apparently casual arrangement.



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