

This course is an eclectic wander through art history. It consists of twenty two-hour talks starting in September 2018 and the topics are largely taken from exhibitions held in London during 2018. The aim is not to provide a guide to the exhibition but to use it as a starting point to discuss the topics raised and to show the major art works. An exhibition often contains 100 to 200 art works but in each two-hour talk I will focus on the 20 to 30 major works and I will often add works not shown in the exhibition to illustrate a point.

#### **References and Copyright**

- The talks are given to a small group of people and all the proceeds, after the cost of the hall is deducted, are given to charity.
- The notes are based on information found on the public websites of Wikipedia, Tate, National Gallery, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Khan Academy and the Art Story.
- If a talk uses information from specific books, websites or articles these are referenced at the beginning of each talk and in the 'References' section of the relevant page. The talks that are based on an exhibition use the booklets and book associated with the exhibition.
- Where possible images and information are taken from Wikipedia under

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



**Art History Revealed – Wednesday 26 September, half-term 31 October – 5 December, Wednesday 9 January – 13 March (no half-term)**

**Exhibitions in Start Date Order**

1. Impressionism in London, Tate Britain, 2 November 2017 – 7 May 2018
2. Modigliani, Tate Modern, 23 November 2017 – 2 April 2018
3. Charles I: King and Collector, Royal Academy, 27 January – 15 April 2018
4. All Too Human Bacon, Freud and a century of painting life, Tate Britain, 28 February – 27 August 2018
5. Victorian Giants: The Birth of Art Photography, National Portrait Gallery, 1 March – 20 May 2018
6. Picasso 1932 - Love, Fame, Tragedy, Tate Modern, March 8 to September 9, 2018
7. Monet & Architecture, National Gallery, 9 April – 29 July 2018
8. Rodin and the Art of Ancient Greece, British Museum, 26 April – 29 July 2018
9. Aftermath Art in the Wake of World War One, Tate Britain, 5 June – 16 September 2018
10. The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy, 12 June 2018 – 19 August 2018
11. Mantegna and Bellini, National Gallery 1 October 2018 – 27 January 2019

12. Burne-Jones, Tate Britain, 24 October 2018 – 24 February 2019
13. Klimt/Schiele, Drawings from the Albertina Museum, Vienna, Royal Academy, 4 November 2018 – 3 February 2019
14. Lorenzo Lotto Portraits, 5 November 2018 – 10 February 2019
15. Gainsborough's Family Album, National Portrait Gallery, 22 November 2018 - 3 February 2019
16. Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). Tate Britain, March 2019. Van Gogh and Britain will be the first exhibition to take a new look at the artist through his relationship with Britain. It will explore how Van Gogh was inspired by British art, literature and culture throughout his career and how he in turn inspired British artists, from Walter Sickert to Francis Bacon.

### **Ideas**

Gothic Revival, based on an Andrew Graham Dixon TV programme but without the references to the literature of the period

Etruscan Art – based on book

The Painting War: Michelangelo versus Leonardo – buy the novel *Oil and Marble*, not released until 5 July, 2018, and *The Lost Battles: Leonardo, Michelangelo and the Artistic Duel That Defined the Renaissance*

The Turner Prize – already done

### **London Galleries**

Wallace

British Museum

Hayward

National Gallery

National Portrait Gallery

White Cube

Serpentine

Tate Britain

Tate Modern

Royal Academy

Estorics



Week 18: based on 'Gainsborough's Family Album, National Portrait Gallery, 22 November 2018 - 3 February 2019'

- Featuring **over fifty works from public and private collections across the world**, *Gainsborough's Family Album* will provide a unique insight into the private life and motivations of Thomas Gainsborough (1727–88), one of Britain's greatest artists. The exhibition includes a number of works that have never been on public display in the UK and will bring together for the first time all twelve surviving portraits of Thomas Gainsborough's daughters.
- *Gainsborough's Family Album* charts Gainsborough's career from youth to maturity, telling the story of an eighteenth-century provincial artist's rise to metropolitan fame and fortune. The exhibition will both offer a new perspective on Gainsborough the portraitist and challenge our thinking about his era and its relationship to our own.
- Gainsborough (1727-1788), Suffolk
  - 1746 m. Margaret Burr, illegitimate daughter Earl of Bedford, £200 annual annuity
  - 1752 Ipswich

- 1759 Bath, aged 33
- 1774 London, Pall Mall, aged 47
- Buried Kew, **last words, “van Dyck’**
- Very fast painter, most technically proficient
- **‘I’m sick of portraits’.**

### Friends

*Mr and Mrs Robert Andrews, 1748, National Gallery*

Garricks

Baille Family where they friends?

### NPG Publicity Release

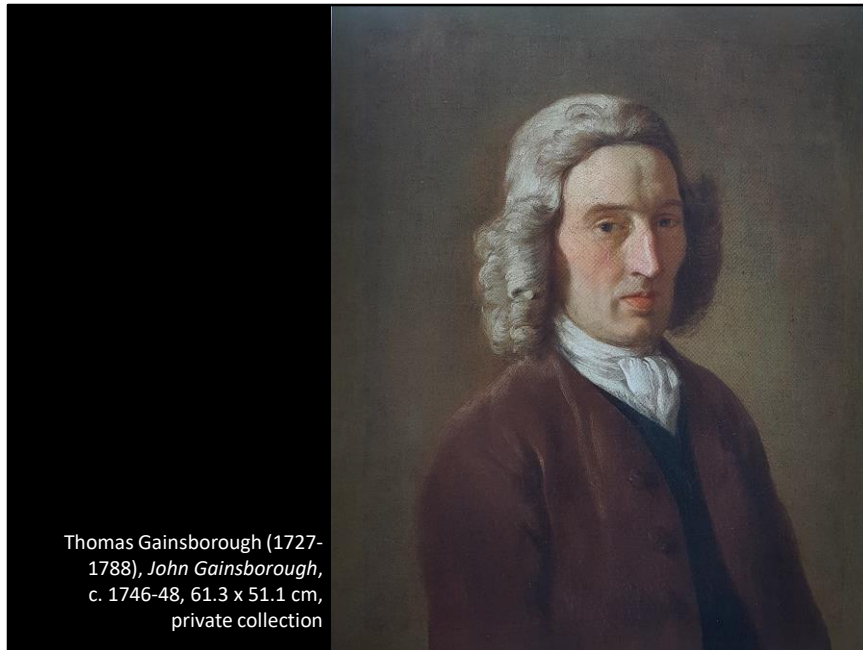
- The National Portrait Gallery London is to bring together for the first time all twelve surviving portraits of Thomas Gainsborough’s daughters in a major new exhibition, *Gainsborough’s Family Album*, opening on 22 November 2018, it was announced today 6 December 2017. The portraits, which trace the development of the **Gainsborough girls** from playful young children to fashionable adults, include such famous images as ***The Artist’s Daughters chasing a Butterfly*** (c.1756) and ***The Artist’s Daughters with a Cat*** (c.1760-1). These will be seen alongside rarely seen paintings, such as the grand double full-length of Mary and Margaret Gainsborough as sumptuously-dressed young women (c.1774).
- Featuring over fifty works from public and private collections across the world, *Gainsborough’s Family Album* will provide a unique insight into the private life and motivations of one of Britain’s greatest artists. The exhibition will include a number of works that have never been on public display in the UK, including an early portrait of the artist’s father John Gainsborough (c. 1746-8) and a drawing of Thomas and his wife Margaret’s pet dogs, *Tristram and Fox*.
- Thomas Gainsborough, (1727–88), was one of Britain’s most successful eighteenth-century portraitists, but in his private correspondence he lamented that the need to earn his living from an endless parade of ‘damnd Faces’ prevented him for pursuing his devotion to landscape, the branch of art he most loved. Nonetheless, he still managed to find the time, the energy and the desire to paint more portraits of his family members than any other artist of his or any earlier period is known to have produced. These include pictures of himself, his father, his wife, his daughters, two sisters and two brothers, a brother-in-law, two nephews, one niece, and a few more distant connections, not to mention his dogs. The vast majority of these works stayed with the family throughout the painter’s lifetime, by the end of which he had singlehandedly created an unusually comprehensive visual record of an eighteenth-century British kinship network, with several of its key players shown more than once, at different stages of their lives.
- *Gainsborough’s Family Album* will chart Gainsborough’s career from youth to

maturity, telling the story of an eighteenth-century provincial artist's rise to metropolitan fame and fortune. However, alongside this runs a more private narrative about the role of portraiture in the promotion of family values, at a time when these were in the process of assuming a recognizably modern form. The exhibition will both offer a new perspective on Gainsborough the portraitist and challenge our thinking about his era and its relationship to our own.

- Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'We are delighted to be able to bring together so many of Gainsborough's family portraits for the first time. The exhibition, which is unique in focusing on his **paintings made for love, rather than for money**, provides an unprecedented opportunity to see the intimate and personal aspect of Gainsborough's portraits through this remarkable body of works **depicting 'ordinary people' from a time when portraiture was almost exclusively confined to the rich, the famous and the upper classes**'.
- Professor David Solkin, Exhibition Curator and Emeritus Professor of the Courtauld Institute of Art says: 'My hope is that *Gainsborough's Family Album* will prompt new ways of thinking about Gainsborough, and about the family albums that so many of us create'.

## References

- <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/thomas-gainsborough-the-good-time-guy/>



Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *John Gainsborough*, c. 1746-48, 61.3 x 51.1 cm, private collection

- **This is Gainsborough's father who died in 1748** when Gainsborough was 21. So, assuming this was painted before his death, it is one of Gainsborough's earliest head and shoulders portraits. His father became the local postmaster following the bankruptcy of his clothing business in the mid-1730s. In the portrait his clothing is respectable but unfashionable. Gainsborough uses the harsh lighting typical of Dutch painting of the period. The lack of refinement in this painting would be unacceptable to clients from the upper ranks of society.

### Notes

- The craquelure or network of fine cracks on the surface of a painting is caused chiefly by shrinkage of the paint or the varnish.

### Gainsborough's Family

- Male Thomas Gainsborough, the youngest of seven surviving siblings
  - Born about 1727 - Sudbury, Suffolk, the youngest son
  - Baptized 14 May 1727 - Great Meeting Hall, Friar Street, Sudbury



- Deceased 2 August 1788 - Pall Mall, London , age at death: possibly 61 years old
- Buried in August 1788 - St Anne's Church, Kew
- Parents
  - M John Gainsborough ca 1683-1748, publican, clothier and postmaster
  - F Mary Burrough ca 1690-1755, daughter of Revd Henry Burrough, married when she was 14
- Spouses and children
  - Married 15 July 1746, Mayfair Chapel, London, to Margaret Burr 1728-1798 with
  - F Mary Gainsborough 1749-1826 married 21 February 1780 to Johann Christian Fischer 1733-1800
  - F Margaret Gainsborough 1751-1820
- Siblings
  - M John Gainsborough ca 1711-1789, known as 'Screaming Jack' because of his failed schemes. He had a passion for designing curiosities and was erratic and untrustworthy. A worry to his parents and a lifelong burden to his siblings.
  - F Mary Gainsborough ca 1713-ca 1790, excelled at flower painting and like all his sisters was very capable. Trained as a milliner, in 1740 she married a young parson called Christopher Gibbon.
  - F Sarah "Sally" Gainsborough ca 1715-1795, stayed at home until 1745 when she married a local carpenter, Philip Dupont.
  - M Humphrey Gainsborough ca 1718-1776, gentle and good natured, modest, inventive and practical. Became a non-conformist minister and a skilled inventor who rivalled James Watt in the design of steam engines, John Harrison in watch design and Charles and Jeremiah Chubb in lock design.
  - F Elizabeth "Betsy" Gainsborough ca 1723-?
  - M Matthias Gainsborough ca 1725-1728, died when he was three when a fork he was running with stabbed him in the head
  - F Susan Gainsborough 1726-?

Book *Gainsborough: A Portrait*

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=YO9oDQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=john+gainsborough&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwip-oXwzfXZAhVGOZAKHZpLBp4Q6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=john%20gainsborough&f=false>



Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *Self-portrait* (?), c. 1736-37, 10 x 8 cm, Stephen Conrad

- This small painting was bought at an auction in 2018 for **£800 'on a hunch'**. On the back in childish script it said '**Gainsboro**'. If authenticated this self-portrait could be worth **£100,000** and would be the earliest work by Gainsborough and possibly the youngest known self-portrait executed by an English master. **Brian Sewell** believes it is an early Gainsborough but **not a self-portrait**.
- On 25 September 2018 Anita Singh reported in **The Telegraph** that new research shows that Gainsborough's career was initiated by a **double murder**. The artist's **uncle and cousin** were killed in revenge attacks after being warned not to pursue a debt. In his will, the **uncle bequeathed £40 to young Gainsborough, then aged 11**, with the proviso that he put it towards a "light handicraft". That money was invaluable, as Gainsborough's father was bankrupt. Two years later, **Gainsborough left home for London to train as an artist**.
- **Gainsborough** was born in Sudbury, Suffolk, only 16 miles from John Constable's birthplace at East Bergholt. Gainsborough was the youngest of seven siblings, but

one died in a terrible accident when he was three. He had two other brothers one of whom became a nonconformist priest and successful inventor and the other an unsuccessful inventor. He had four sisters all of whom were very capable. He married in 1746 when he was 19 to Margaret Burr who was a year younger. They had three daughters, but one died when she was two.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *Self-portrait*, c. 1739-40, 22.9 x 19.7 cm, oil on paper laid on canvas, private collection, age 12/13

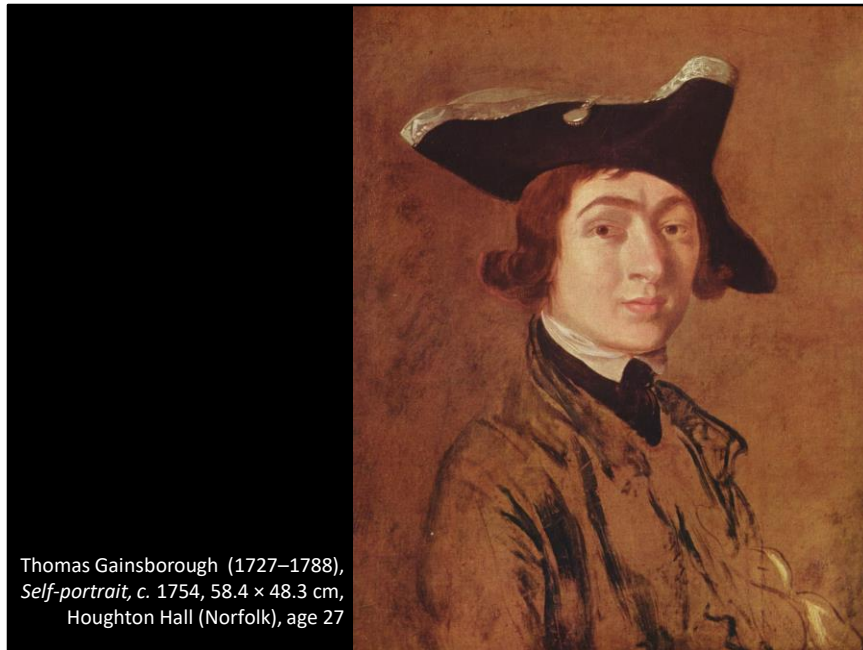
Francis Hayman (1708-1776), *Self-portrait*, c. 1735

- We know he was an artistic prodigy. He was painting heads and small landscapes by the **age of 10**. He attended Sudbury grammar school whose headmaster was his maternal uncle Revd Henry Burrough. He was so precocious that his father sent him to London to study art in **1740**, when he was 13. He studied with **Francis Hayman** and **William Hogarth**. He studied engraving under a silversmith but switched to St. Martin's Lane Academy. This was started by Sir James Thornhill in 1711 and was revitalised in 1735 by William Hogarth, then the most influential artist in London. During the 1740s, Hayman taught at St Martin's Lane Academy and influenced the young and impressionable Thomas Gainsborough, whom he is said to have introduced to the more debauched aspects of London life. Despite his reputation Hayman was made President of the Society of Artists from 1766 to 1768 and was a founding member of the Royal Academy.
- This painting of Gainsborough was first **discovered in 1983**. It was at first argued that Gainsborough was 11 but it is now **assumed he was 13** as he had just arrived in London and would be inclined to demonstrate his skills. Even at 13 it is not

possible to find a self-portrait of this skill from another artist in this period.

### **Bio:Gainsborough**

- **Thomas Gainsborough** (christened 14 May 1727 – 2 August 1788) was an English portrait and landscape painter. He was born the youngest son of John Gainsborough, a weaver in Suffolk, and, in 1740, left home to study art in London with Hubert Gravelot, Francis Hayman, and William Hogarth. In 1746, he married Margaret Burr, and the couple became the parents of two daughters. He moved to Bath in 1759 where fashionable society patronised him, and he began exhibiting in London. In 1769, he became a founding member of the Royal Academy, but his relationship with the organization was thorny and he sometimes withdrew his work from exhibition. Gainsborough moved to London in 1774, and painted portraits of the King and Queen, but the King was obliged to name as royal painter Gainsborough's rival Joshua Reynolds. In his last years, Gainsborough painted relatively simple landscapes and is credited (with Richard Wilson) as the originator of the 18th century British landscape school. Gainsborough died of cancer in 1788 and is interred at St. Anne's Church, Kew, Surrey. He painted quickly and his later pictures are characterised by a light palette and easy strokes. He preferred landscapes to portraits. Cecil Kellaway portrayed Gainsborough in the 1945 film *Kitty*.
- Gainsborough can be seen as a **forerunner of modernity** in his **freedom in handling paint**. Later critics, notably Roger Fry, saw the **foreshadowing of Impressionism** in this painterly flow. It might also seem to **anticipate abstraction**. It is no accident that one of **Gainsborough's greatest admirers was the American artist James McNeill Whistler**, that pioneer of 'Art for Art's sake'. Whistler emulated Gainsborough's painterly elegance in his own portraits. He even adopted many of his predecessor's methods, including the use of lengthy brushes and exceptionally liquid paint to achieve effects at once daring and refined.
- **In summary Gainsborough** was born 1727 in Sudbury, Suffolk, the son of a cloth merchant who went bankrupt. Sent to London to work for an engraver at 13; opened his own studio at 17; married at 19. Spent 1750s in Suffolk and 1760s in Bath, where he established himself as a fashionable portrait painter. Founder-member of the Royal Academy in 1768; moved back to London in 1774. Squabbled with RA and held annual exhibition at Schomberg House, his home in Pall Mall. In later years he specialised in 'fancy pictures', idealised portraits of pretty, well-fed beggar children, which are too sentimental for today's tastes. Died 1788, London; buried in Kew churchyard.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Self-portrait*, c. 1754, 58.4 × 48.3 cm, Houghton Hall (Norfolk), age 27

- There is an inscription on the back of the canvas 'Painted by Thomas Gainsborough at **Ipswich** about the year 1754 (2<sup>nd</sup> sitting of himself) **aged 28**'. In 1746, he had married Margaret Burr, and the couple became the parents of two daughters. He moved to Bath in 1759 where fashionable society patronised him, and he began exhibiting in London.
- The canvas is a rare example of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century canvas that has **never been relined**. Relining involves removing the canvas from the frame, trimming off the edges, gluing paper to its surface, turning it over and gluing a new canvas to the back. This strengthens and flattens the painting. In some cases the canvas has rotted and is removed by filing and sanding with pumice down to the original ground before gluing on a new canvas.
- The portrait shows no sign of his trade and the '**hand in waistcoat**' was the most **popular pose** for male sitters between the 1730s and 1750s. The **frock coat** he is wearing had just come into **fashion for country gentlemen**. The **three-cornered hat** was typically only worn in outdoor conversation pieces where it signifies **casual rustic ease and elegance**. As Gainsborough came from a family of cloth

merchants he would have been well aware of the latest fashions. The faint brushwork may indicate a rural setting with a tree to the left and bushes to the right.

## **Notes**

### **Gainsborough in Context – Leading 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries British Artists**

‘**William Hogarth** (1697-1764) and **Thomas Gainsborough** (1727-1788), exemplifies the **myth of the self-made man**, as well as the **shift in social class dominance**. Moreover, portraiture emphasizes the **middle-class’s adoption of aristocratic visual language**, while in turn depicting men as wealthy industrials who benefit the national economy and define the manly character of England. Although **middle-class reformers** were determined to prove that the **titled class was effeminate and parasitic**, it was the aristocratic ideal of masculinity that the middling ranks adopted as their own. English artists Hogarth and Gainsborough were influential in addressing the tension produced by the shifting social lines of the Industrial Revolution. Bound to Britain’s wealth for their own survival, both Hogarth and Gainsborough sought the **patronage of the rising middle-class** while sustaining their own notions of the self-made myth.’ (Jayme Yahr, 2010, “Appropriating Identity: William Hogarth, Thomas Gainsborough, and Britain’s Myth of the Self-Made Man”, *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & The Arts*, no. 11 (December), 1 - 14. <http://www.forumjournal.org/article/view/659>)

See ‘Gainsborough’s Modernity’, William Vaughan, 2002, Tate  
(<https://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/gainsborough-modernity>)

### **17<sup>th</sup> Century**

- **Peter Lely** (1618–1680) – Principal Painter in Ordinary to Charles II (1661)
- Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
- Sir James Thornhill (1675–1734)
- **William Hogarth** (1697–1764)

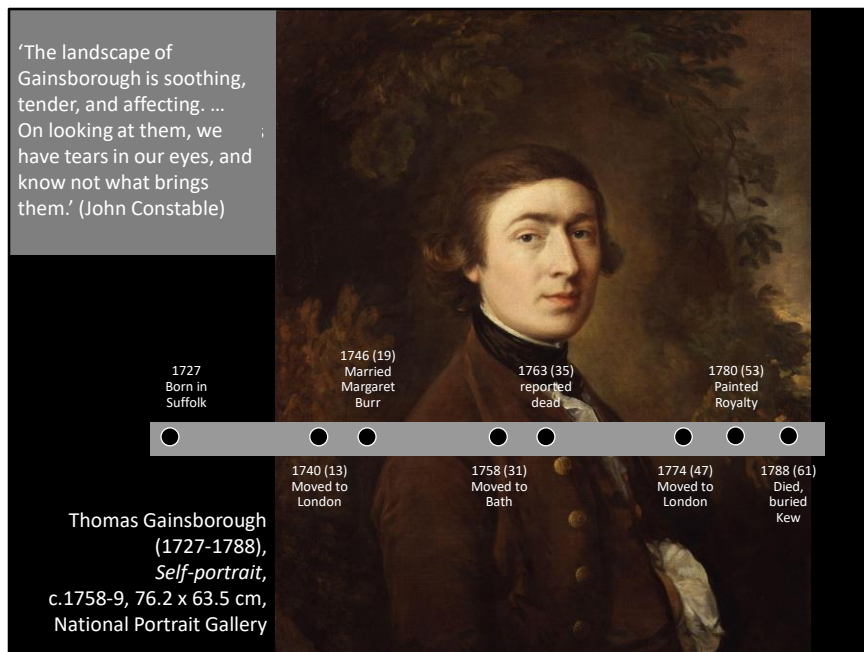
### **18<sup>th</sup> Century**

- **Sir Joshua Reynolds** (1723–1792) – Principal Painter in Ordinary to the King
- George Stubbs (1724–1806)
- **Thomas Gainsborough** (1727-1788)
- Johann Zoffany (1733–1810) – born in Frankfurt
- Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797)
- **William Blake** (1757–1827)
- Sir Thomas Lawrence (1760–1830) – Principal Painter in Ordinary to the King
- George Morland (1763–1804)
- Thomas Girtin (1775–1802)
- **Joseph Mallord William Turner** (1775–1851)

- **John Constable** (1776–1837)
- Sir David Wilkie (1785–1841) – Principal Painter in Ordinary to the King
- Benjamin Haydon (1786–1846)
- William Mulready (1786–1863)
- William Etty (1787–1849)
- John Martin (1789–1854)
- Sir George Hayter (1792–1871) – Principal Painter in Ordinary to the Queen

From Hogarth to Reynolds, from Gainsborough to Turner, the great protagonists of English painting between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.





Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *Self-portrait*, c.1758-9 (aged 31), 76.2 x 63.5 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- Gainsborough was a **mercurial character** with a clear understanding of his own abilities and a **stubbornness** inherited from his East Anglian nonconformist roots. His artistic training (he was mostly **self-taught**) exaggerated his **temperamental opposition to the studio system** operated by so many of his rivals and **posed a problem** which he was able to address by adopting a **speedy technique**. He did not suffer fools gladly and hated humbug. He had some **musical ability and a lively wit**. His **dislike of portraiture** is indicated by this letter he wrote,
  - '**They think ... that they reward your merit by their Company ... but I ... know that they have but one part worth looking at, and that is their Purse; their Hearts are seldom near enough the right place to get a sight of it.**'
- Gainsborough would begin painting at 11:00am, pause for refreshments at one and have his main meal at three in the afternoon. He had two to four sittings a day and by dinner time was exhausted. It is said that **sex, drink, wild-living and music** came as his main sources of relief.
- But he loved landscape.** John Constable, in a lecture at the British Institution in

1836 said,

- ‘The landscape of Gainsborough is soothing, tender, and affecting. ... On looking at them, we have tears in our eyes, and know not what brings them.’
- He was also a talented musician and said, ‘**I’m sick of portraits and wish very much to take my viol de gamba and walk off to some sweet village where I can paint landscapes** and enjoy the fag end of life in quietness and ease.’
- **In 1740** (aged 13), he moved to London as a student.
- **In 1746** (aged 19), **he married** Margaret Burr (1728-1797) the illegitimate daughter of Henry the third Duke of Beaufort who settled a £200 annuity on her. They remained married for 42 years, until his death, and had two daughters.
- **In 1758** (aged 31), Gainsborough and his family **moved to Bath**. There, he studied portraits by van Dyck and was eventually able to attract a fashionable clientele. At this point he felt able to charge five guineas for a portrait. He underwent a remarkable change in style in Bath. Before he moved he produced doll-like figures in fresh East-Anglian landscapes but he changed to painting figures which were the acme of elegance. By 1760 he had moved to the newly built No. 11 Royal Circus and was charging 20 guineas for a portrait (80 guineas for a full length).
- **In 1761** (aged 33), he began to send work to display publically at the **Society of Arts exhibition** in London (now the **Royal Society of Arts**, of which he was one of the earliest members).
- **In 1763 he became so ill the Bath Journal reported his death**. He told a friend he had succumbed to ‘nervous fever’ and hinted that as well as overwork his illness had been brought on by overindulging in sexual pleasures during his visit to London.
- **In 1768** he was invited to become a founding member of the Royal Academy. He submitted works to the Royal Academy's annual exhibitions and selected portraits of well-known or notorious clients in order to attract attention. The exhibitions helped him acquire a national reputation. His relationship with the academy was not an easy one and he **stopped exhibiting** his paintings in **1773**.
- **In 1774** (aged 47), Gainsborough and his family moved to London to live in Schomberg House, Pall Mall and in 1777 he again began exhibiting at the Royal Academy for the next six years.
- **In 1780** (aged 53), he painted the portraits of George III and his queen and afterwards received many royal commissions. In 1784 the royal painter, Allan Ramsay died but the king was obliged to give the job to his rival Joshua Reynolds although Gainsborough remained the royal favourite.
- **In 1788** (aged 61), he died of cancer in Richmond and was buried along his friend Joshua Kirby in St. Anne’s Church, Kew.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *Portrait of the Artist with his Wife and Daughter*, c. 1748, 92.1 x 70.5 cm, National Gallery

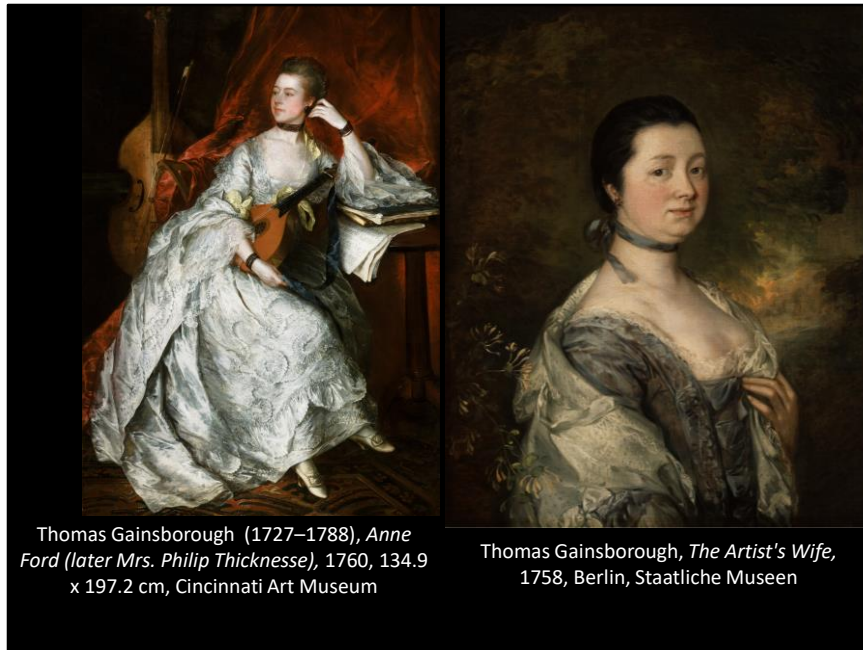
Acquired under the acceptance-in-lieu scheme at the wish of Sybil, Marchioness of Cholmondeley, in memory of her brother, Sir Philip Sassoon, 1994

### Gainsborough's Wife

- **Painted when he was 20** this conversation piece shows Gainsborough, his **young wife Margaret** (b. 1728, so 20 in this painting) **as fashionable gentlefolk**. Gainsborough was always keen to establish his credentials as a gentleman perhaps because of his father's bankruptcy and his wife's birth.
- This is the only known portrait in which Gainsborough included himself with his family. With him are his wife, Margaret Burr, whom he married in July 1746, and their daughter. The style of the background and the evident **difficulties Gainsborough had with the proportions of the rather stiff-limbed figures** suggest a date around 1747–8, when Gainsborough was still working in London. The child may, therefore, be the Gainsborough's first-born but **short-lived daughter Mary** who died in 1748. Her date of birth is so far untraced, but the child in the picture would seem to be around 18-months-old. Alternatively, she may be Gainsborough's **eldest surviving daughter also called Mary** who was born shortly

before February 1750. Gainsborough holds in **his hand a paper, perhaps once showing a sketch**, but now transparent with age. It indicates his interest in drawing the landscape.

- The painting was for the **close family circle** and is unlikely to have been shown outside due to its **unfinished state** (there are visible pentimenti, unfinished passages and his wife has no left hand) and to the **risqué glimpse of Margaret's right calf** through her muslin apron.
- In 1754 we believe that Gainsborough could only charge £5 for a head and shoulders portrait in the 1750s and in the mid-1750s he appears to have fallen into debt. He put more energy into finding new clients and he was successful. The large number of head and shoulders portraits provided intensive training in capturing a likeness.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *Self-portrait*, c. 1758-59, 76.2 x 63.5 c, National Portrait Gallery

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *The Artist's Wife*, 1758, Berlin, Staatliche Museen

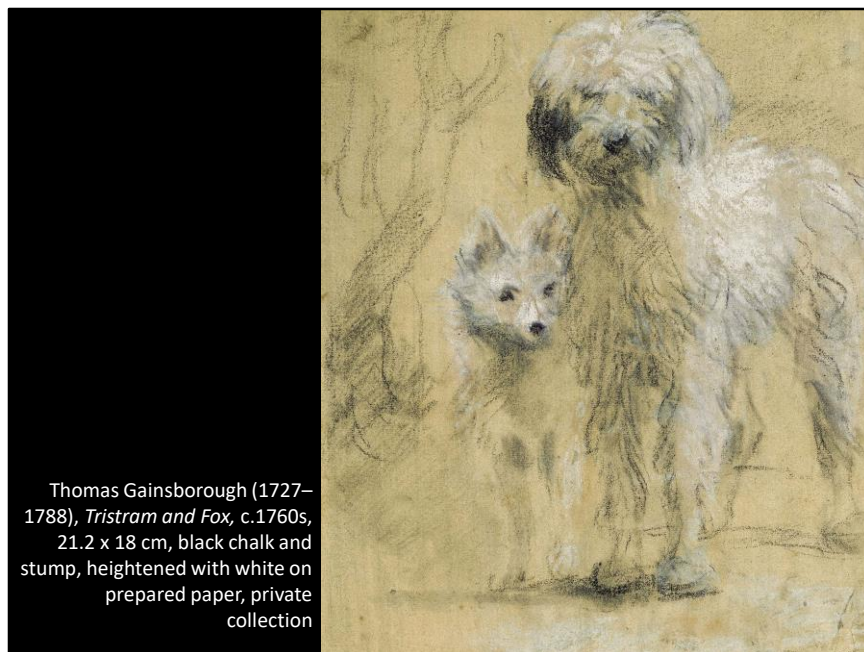
Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Anne Ford (later Mrs. Philip Thicknesse)*, 1760, 134.9 x 197.2 cm, Cincinnati Art Museum

- **The self-portrait and its pendant of his wife were painted just after they moved to Bath in 1758.** The following year he sold his house in Ipswich and signed a seven-year lease in Abbey Street, Bath. In 1766 he bought a house in the Circus and sub-let the house in Abbey Street. In total they would live in Bath for fifteen years. Gainsborough had built a sound career in Ipswich through his links to the local gentry. In Bath he faced a much greater challenge to make a name for himself among the aristocracy who had been attracted by the spa waters and the lively social life. This portrait was therefore painted as a multi-layered advertisement. It shows him dressed as a gentleman as well as showing the type of product he could produce for his clients. Finally, it shows his ability to produce an accurate likeness as potential clients could compare it with the original. He shows himself as a confident member of the 1760s beau monde although the brown coat would indicate his rustic background as the fashionable society colours were red, blue or

green.

### Gainsborough's Wife

- His wife's portrait shows his ability to paint fashionable ladies. Both works would have been displayed at his home where clients were invited to see his portraits of local celebrities. The style echoes Sir Anthony van Dyck and Sir Peter Lely. Gainsborough has depicted **his wife as an aristocratic 'Beauty'**, which as the illegitimate daughter of a duke she may well have thought appropriate. She is wearing the **latest French fashion and the low-cut dress is daring but acceptable** for the period as we can see from this portrait of Anne Ford. He has a husband and wife pair facing in the same direction was unusual but acceptable at the time. It indicates they did not hang side-by-side but opposite each other or one above the other.
- They married in 1747 when she was eighteen. She was **considered very pretty, kind and virtuous** and she was the illegitimate daughter of a duke. The duke paid her an annual pension of £200 for the rest of her life. Gainsborough has integrated her into the landscape space in a characteristic way. This allowed this as a psychological "sounding board" be used.
- **Anne Ford** (1737-1824) was an 18<sup>th</sup>-century English musician and singer who was famous for her struggle to perform in public and for a scandal. Her earliest attempts to appear in public venues were unsuccessful and her father went so far as to have her arrested twice to prevent her escaping his control. Eventually held her first public subscription concert in 1760. She performed a series of subsequent concerts although it was considered controversial for a woman to play the "masculine" viola da gamba. **The Earl of Jersey** became infatuated with her and offered her **£800 a year to be his mistress**. When she refused, Lord Jersey tried to sabotage her initial public concert, but she earned £15 from it nonetheless. In 1761 she published a pamphlet, *A Letter from Miss F—d to a Person of Distinction*, defending her position. This in turn provoked a pamphlet from the Earl, *A Letter to Miss F—d*. The brief pamphlet war between them created a scandal but in 1762 she became **the third wife of Philip Thicknesse**, thereby gaining higher social standing. Thicknesse was an author and friend of Gainsborough. They travelled Europe before settling in Bath. In later life he became an 'ornamental hermit'. In 1792 she and her husband were travelling to Italy when he died suddenly in Boulogne. She was imprisoned during the Reign of Terror, but she was released under a general pardon for all prisoners who could prove that they could earn their living; her profession had saved her life. She lived until 1824 and died aged 86.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Tristram and Fox*, c.1760s, 21.2 x 18 cm, black chalk and stump, heightened with white on prepared paper, private collection

- **Fox, a fox-like Spitz or Pomeranian**, appears on the left and **Tristram**, named after Laurence Sterne's anti-hero Tristram Shandy, is the larger **old English sheepdog type on the right**. Tristram was **Margaret Gainsborough's pet and Fox was his**. If we take them as surrogates for their partners, then it appears **Tristram is in charge**. As the composition has echoes of a double portrait it is possible Gainsborough was making a wry comment on his marriage.
- In the 1760s Gainsborough became one of the two most sought-after portrait painters in England and he became **financially successful**. The other portrait painter was Joshua Reynolds. The two men were very different as **Reynolds was calm and sociable** whereas **Gainsborough was volatile, prickly and easily angered**. He was impulsive and his language was often vulgar and bawdy. He was said to have signed his letters to female acquaintances 'Yours to the hilt', a sexual reference. Reynolds came from a learned family, but Gainsborough's father was a failed cloth merchant and weaver.





Thomas Gainsborough(1727-1788), *Portrait of Mrs Gainsborough*, c.1778, Courtauld Gallery

- This portrait was one of the first paintings to be acquired by Samuel Courtauld, who bought it in 1921, along with a work he believed to be a self-portrait by Thomas Gainsborough painted as a pendant to this portrait of his wife; the portrait of the artist is now thought to be either a copy, or at least to have been **completed by his nephew and studio assistant, Gainsborough Dupont** (1754-1797), the only child of Gainsborough's sister Sarah (1715-1795).
- **In 1774 he left Bath** and took a lease on the western third of **Schomberg House, 80 Pall Mall** where he built a studio and exhibition room in the garden. Next door a quack doctor opened a 'Temple of Health and Hymen' with a huge bed fitted with early electrical devices. The Temple was a high-class brothel and gambling den that was eventually raided by the police and closed down.
- **Margaret Burr** (born in 1728, so 50 in this painting) married Gainsborough when she was only eighteen and he a year older, and it has been suggested that this portrait was painted to **mark her fiftieth birthday**. Since their marriage, Gainsborough had become one of England's leading portraitists, and in the tradition of his wife's family, the artist would paint a new **portrait of Margaret on**

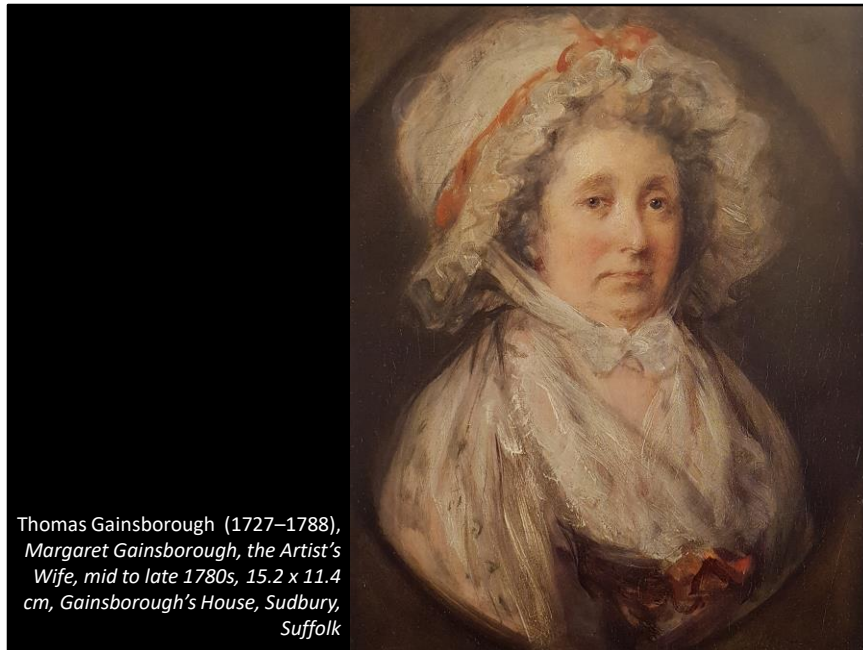


**their wedding anniversary each year.**

- This portrait is **striking for its suggestion of intimacy** between painter and sitter; Mrs Gainsborough is shown with her body and face pointing straight towards the viewer, **her eyes meeting our gaze directly**, her lips slightly curved into **what may be a smile**, but which also suggests resignation. Equally striking is the mantle edged with black lace which she has draped over her head and shoulders; this is formed from a **powerful swirl of energetic brush-strokes** around her head, which, continued by the position of her hands, suggests a subtle, personalised version of the painted architectural ovals within which, many more formal eighteenth century portraits were framed.
- Towards the latter part of his career, Gainsborough's handling of paint became **increasingly rhythmic and flowing**. Working with thinned paints he experimented with **ever-bolder effects of transparency and light**. In fact, it may be possible to see in the strong back-lighting that illuminates the sitter's left side – throwing the delicately patterned black lace into silhouette – a reflection of Gainsborough's experiments with the newly fashionable art of painting transparent images on glass. Such images, when lit from behind by flickering candlelight, could produce a startling effect of glowing and moving light. During the mid-1770s Gainsborough painted a number of **landscape images on glass** to be viewed through a magnifying lens in a specially constructed 'peep-show' box (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum), and it is possible that his interest in such lighting effects spilled over into his portraiture.

### References

- Courtauld Gallery website



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788),  
*Margaret Gainsborough, the Artist's  
Wife*, mid to late 1780s, 15.2 x 11.4  
cm, Gainsborough's House, Sudbury,  
Suffolk

Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Margaret Gainsborough, the Artist's Wife*, mid to late 1780s, 15.2 x 11.4 cm, Gainsborough's House, Sudbury, Suffolk

- This may be the **last portrait he painted of his wife** and he used a much-reduced format. Such a small scale takes on the intimate role of a portrait miniature. This and another even small likeness are clearly private in nature.
- Margaret Gainsborough (1728-1797, née Burr), **died age 68/69**. She was the illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Beaufort and married Gainsborough on 15 July 1746 at Dr Keith's Mayfair Chapel, London. She is buried in St. Anne Churchyard, Kew with Gainsborough.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Humphry Gainsborough, The Artist's Brother*, c. 1754–56, 58 x 48 cm, National Gallery of Ireland

### Gainsborough's Brothers

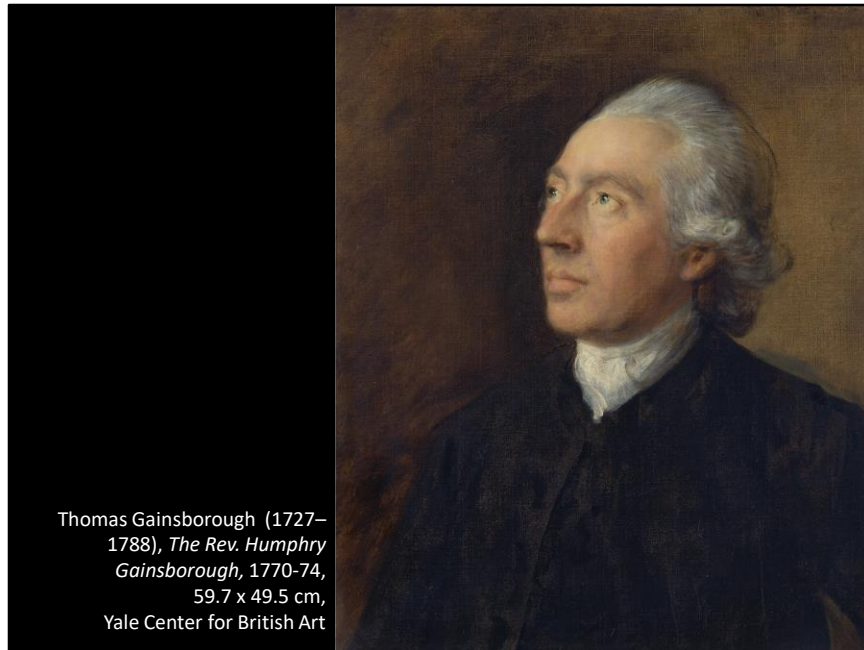
- This is the first portrait Gainsborough is known to have painted of his siblings and the only example painted in Ipswich. By then his brother was a nonconformist minister with a flair for engineering and he had long been absent from Suffolk. His reputation as a man of learning explains the harsh profile which had been used earlier in the century as a format to honour men of letters and scholars. It may also indicate his modesty and lack of showiness.
- 'The **most distinguished of Gainsborough's siblings**, his elder brother the Revd Humphrey Gainsborough (bap. 1718, d. 1776), was an engineer of note who balanced his nonconformist ministry at Henley-on-Thames with improvements to the navigation of the River Thames and the construction of a steam engine which caused some concern to his rival, James Watt. His sister, Mary Gibbons (1713–1790), a lodging-house keeper in Bath, showed considerable entrepreneurial skill.' (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography)

Wikipedia:

- Reverend Humphrey Gainsborough (1718 – 23 August 1776) was an English non-conformist minister, engineer, and inventor. Humphrey Gainsborough was pastor to the Independent Church in Henley-on-Thames, England. He was the brother of the artist Thomas Gainsborough. He **invented a drill plough in 1766 which made three drills, sowed the seed and covered them**, winning a prize of £60 from the Royal Society for his efforts. He also **invented the tide mill (1761)**, which allowed a mill wheel to **rotate in either direction**, winning a £50 prize from the Society for the Encouragement of Arts in London. In addition, he designed a **self-ventilating fish wagon (1762)**. Gainsborough **designed Conway's Bridge, built in 1763 at Park Place close to Henley**, an interesting rustic arched stone structure that still carries traffic on the road between Wargrave and Henley today. In **1768, he improved the slope on the road up the steep White Hill** to the east of Henley, straightening it in the process. In the 1760s, Gainsborough showed a model of a condensing **steam engine to James Watt**. Watt had been working independently on improvements to the Newcomen "atmospheric engine" and subsequently patented these in 1769. He perhaps included some of – and at least built on – Gainsborough's ideas. Gainsborough is thus probably **less well-known than he might have been**. The **lock, weir and footbridge at Marsh Lock**, just upstream from Henley on the River Thames, were **designed by Gainsborough**, together with **other early locks from Sonning to Maidenhead (1772–73)**. A blue plaque in Gainsborough's honour can be found in the town of Henley itself on the gates of the Manse, the house where he lived next to the Christ Church United Reformed Church. Inside he **designed an early security chain and plate on one of the outside doors, allowing the door to be partially opened**, that is still there now. Similar designs are used on many people's front doors today. He also invented a weighing machine for wagons and their contents, a curious sundial now at the British Museum and the first fireproof box.

## **References**

<http://collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/1670976>



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *The Rev. Humphry Gainsborough*, 1770–74, 59.7 x 49.5 cm, Yale Center for British Art

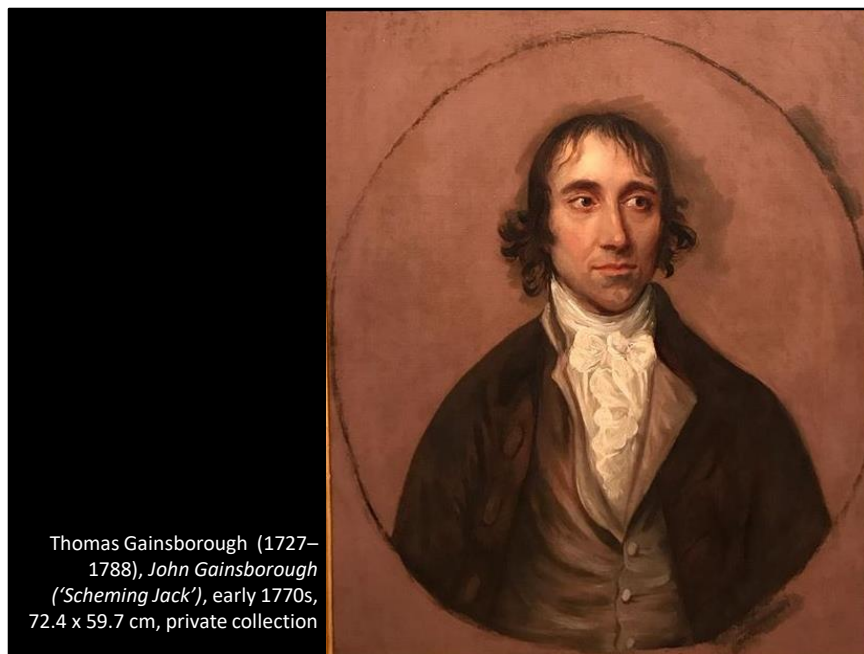
- A much later painting of his older brother when he was a minister at Henley-on-Thames. Humphrey is the only sibling he painted twice. This is a rare instance of the sitter being shown looking upwards and to one side and it suggest Old Master's images of saints in ecstasy and we assume was Gainsborough honouring the deep religious beliefs of his brother. This may explain why one of his parishioners paid Gainsborough to paint a copy of the picture (now in private collection), the only time he was paid to replicate a portrait of one of his relations.
- 'The **most distinguished of Gainsborough's siblings**, his elder brother the Revd Humphrey Gainsborough (bap. 1718, d. 1776), was an engineer of note who balanced his nonconformist ministry at Henley-on-Thames with improvements to the navigation of the River Thames and the construction of a steam engine which caused some concern to his rival, James Watt. His sister, Mary Gibbons (1713–1790), a lodging-house keeper in Bath, showed considerable entrepreneurial skill.' (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography)

### Epitaph

Philip Thicknesse wrote in The Gentleman's Magazine in 1785: “... ***one of the most ingenious men that ever lived, and one of the best that ever died ... Perhaps of all the mechanical geniuses this or any nation has produced. Mr Gainsborough was the first***”.

#### **References**

<http://collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/1670976>



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *John Gainsborough ('Scheming Jack')*, early 1770s, 72.4 x 59.7 cm, private collection

### **Gainsborough's other Brother - 'Scheming Jack'**

- His brother John was a less successful inventor. He is said to have invented a flying machine with copper wings, a cradle which rocked itself, a cuckoo which would sing all the year round, a wheel that turned in a still bucket of water' and an invention for the discovery of longitude. All these schemes demanded money and all failed. He became known in the family as 'Scheming jack'.
- The painting is signed 'Gainsborow' which, if original, may be a punning reference to his brother's chronic pleas for financial support. He was a failed inventor who always had some scheme on the go which always needed more finance. His explanation for their lack of success was that he was never given the time and money to seem them through.
- The figure looks complete, but the background is nothing more than expanse of primed canvas apart from a painted oval and some shading around the head. It is possible Gainsborough painted the head and Dupont later filled in the body whose handling lacks the lightness and fluidity of his uncle.
- His dishevelled and lanky hair and his lack of a wig show his lack of concern for his

appearance and place him below the rank of a fine gentleman.





Thomas Gainsborough, *The Painter's Daughters chasing a Butterfly*, c. 1756, National Gallery

William Hogarth (1697-1764), *The Mackinnon Children*, 1741, 180 x 143 cm, National Gallery of Ireland

### Gainsborough's Daughters

- This painting, in terms of **its sensitivity and rapid technique** has been described one of **the most remarkable paintings of the eighteenth century**.
- This is perhaps Gainsborough's **earliest portrait of his two daughters Mary and Margaret**; some **six others are known**. **Mary** was baptised on 3 February 1750 (taking the same name as a daughter who died two years earlier) and **Margaret** was baptised on 22 August 1751, so they were **five and six years old** when this was painted. The portrait was probably painted in Ipswich in the mid-1750s and left unfinished.
- It demonstrates what was understood by the term '**sensibility**' in the late eighteenth century. Sensibility was an acute perception of or responsiveness toward something, such as the emotions of another. Laurence Sterns wrote in 1768 'Dear Sensibility! ... unexhausted of all that's precious in our joys, or costly in our sorrows'.

- Unlike Hogarth, who had no children, Gainsborough took full advantage of the fact that he had lovely, paintable daughters. **Mary, the elder, on the right was cool, poised, wise and restrained while Margaret was impulsive and heedless of danger.** As they emerge from a dark wood the elder Mary looks wary as she constrains the impetuous Margaret who is trying to leap forward to grasp the fragile symbol of beauty unaware of the danger of being **pricked by one of the thorns of the thistle** on which the butterfly has alighted. It therefore symbolizes impulsiveness versus constraint and the transience of human pleasures.
- As well as showing Gainsborough's **love and tenderness** it also shows him experimenting with **loose brushwork** which would have been unacceptable with a paying client at this stage of his career. Surprisingly, he did not take the painting with him when they moved to Bath in 1759 but left it with his friend the headmaster of Ipswich School.
- The painting echoes one by William Hogarth called *The Mackinnon Children* (1741, 180 x 143 cm, National Gallery of Ireland) in which a boy reaches out to grasp a butterfly that has alighted on a sunflower while a young girl watches.

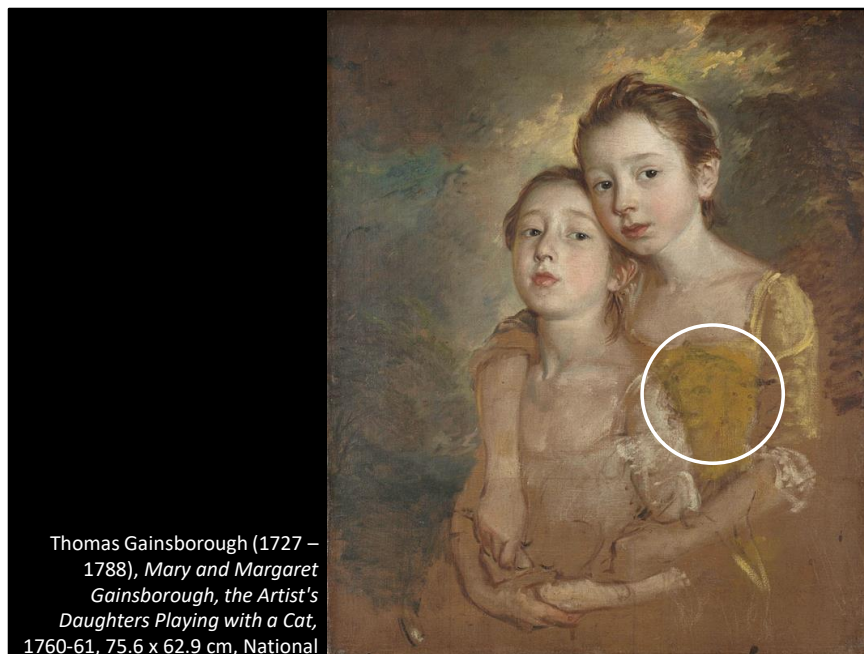
### References

- Hugh Belsey, 'Thomas Gainsborough', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *The Painter's Two Daughters*, c.1758, Victoria and Albert, bequeathed by John Forster

- One **of three double portraits of Mary and Margaret** painted soon **after they went to Bath**. The painting was left in an unfinished state at the time of his death and was later **cut in two** and sold to different collectors. After one collector died in the 1870s the other purchased the work and commissioned a **restorer to reunite the paintings**. A decision was made to **place their heads at the same level** and add a few black outlines to join Mary's shoulder to the rest of her arm. Only recently was it realised that Mary would have been looking down on her younger sister from a greater height and at a slightly further distance.
- Gainsborough called Mary and Margaret 'Molly and the Captain' and they are typically shown touching one another in an attitude of emotional intimacy.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727 – 1788), *Mary and Margaret Gainsborough, the Artist's Daughters Playing with a Cat*, 1760-61, 75.6 x 62.9 cm, National Gallery (bought in 1923)

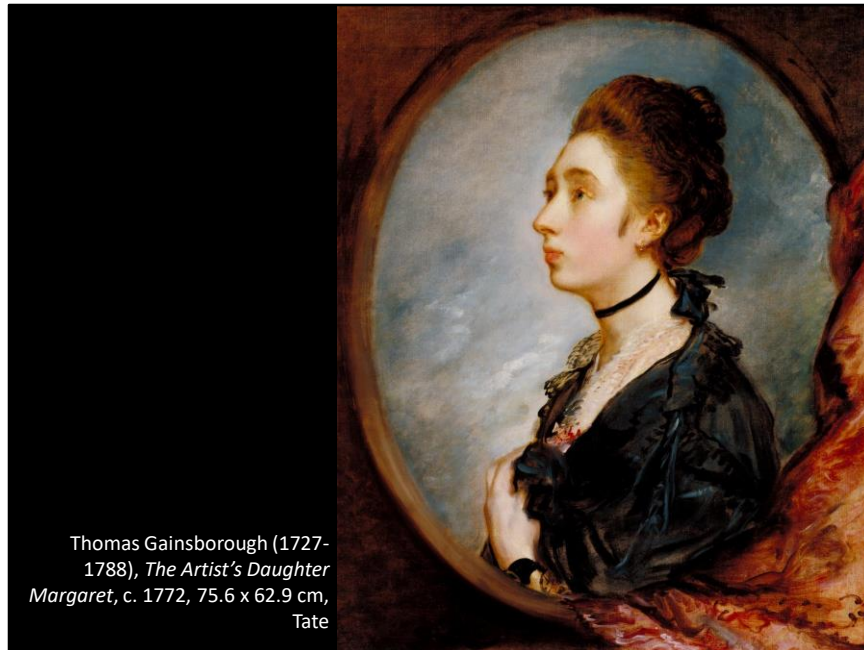
- Gainsborough's daughters Mary and Margaret were baptised in February 1750 and August 1751. Mary appears to be about nine or ten years old, and Margaret about eight or nine.
- Gainsborough had moved with his family from Ipswich to Bath in the autumn of 1759 and this work may therefore have been painted in Bath rather than in Ipswich. **The painting is unfinished, but the outlines of a cat whose tail is being pulled** can be seen on the lap of the elder girl.
- Of the three unfinished double portraits of his daughters this is the only one to have survived in its original proportions. In fact in 1923 when it was sold by the artist's family it was still to receive its first coat of varnish. Mary has grasped the tail of the cat which snarls as it tries to free itself.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Mary and Margaret Gainsborough, the Artist's Daughters at their Drawing*, c. 1763-64, 127.3 x 101.7 cm, Worcester Art Museum

- Following a life-threatening illness in 1763 Gainsborough's thoughts turned towards safeguarding his daughters' future.
- While it was fashionable for young women to learn drawing and watercolour as hobbies, Gainsborough trained his **daughters** to be **professional artists**, in case they should "miss getting husbands". This notion was revolutionary for the 18th century. His idea was that they could make money from landscape painting even though he had failed to do so.
- The sculpture is the **Farnese Flora a female sculpture representing the goddess of spring**.
- Margaret is standing in a **Van Dyck pose with clothing of that age** and with a large swathe of blue satin over her arm. Mary's white bodice is covered in flowers signifying the future promise of nature.
- Concerned for their future, Gainsborough took care to ensure that they were well educated, sending them to an **exclusive boarding school** in Chelsea and **tutoring them in drawing and landscape painting**. A few years after this portrait was made,

**Mary entered into a disastrous marriage** with the celebrated oboist, Johann Christian Fischer, an associate of her father. In later life she lived with her younger sister Margaret, although by then Mary suffered from **severe mental illness**.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *The Artist's Daughter Margaret*, c. 1772, 75.6 x 62.9 cm, Tate

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *The Artist's Daughter Margaret*, c. 1772, 75.6 x 62.9 cm, Tate

- “Gainsborough’s younger daughter, Margaret, was in her **mid-twenties** when her father painted this portrait. Although he enjoyed a reckless social life, Gainsborough attempted to **shield his daughters from the attentions of would-be suitors, declining to ‘make fine trumpery of them, and let them be led away with Vanity, and ever subject to disappointment in the wild Goose chase’**. Margaret **remained unmarried** and lived out the final years her life in Acton, west London, where she cared for her elder sister.” (Tate website)

### References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/gainsborough-the-artists-daughter-margaret-n01482>





Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Portrait of Mary Gainsborough*, 1777, 76 × 64.5 cm, Tate Britain

- “Gainsborough was very fond of his two daughters **and painted them frequently** from childhood into their late twenties. Concerned for their future, he took care to ensure that they were **well educated**, sending them to an **exclusive boarding school in Chelsea** and tutoring them in drawing and landscape painting.” (Tate website)
- **Mary married without her father’s permission** and to complicate matters **Margaret believed that Fischer was in love with her** so his marriage to her older sister led to unhappiness between the girls. Within a year of their marriage the couple were **in dire financial straits**. Gainsborough discovered she **had ordered expensive fabrics and tried to sell them immediately with the illegal proceeds going to her and her husband**. Gainsborough wrote to his sister, ‘She has convinced me that **she would go to the Gallows to serve this Man**.’ Mary was devoted to him but the marriage only lasted a few years. **In his will Gainsborough left everything to his wife and Margaret** with instructions to provide Mary with what she needed. This was **to prevent Fischer claiming her inheritance** as her undivorced husband.



- Mary was sly, headstrong as well as being impulsive and unstable. When she was **young she started to show signs of a mental illness** that marred the rest of her life. By 1771 the **family doctor had given up on her** and declared she would never recover her senses again. Gainsborough himself had been affected by a similar illness in 1763. He called in two other doctors and they provided some temporary relief.
- In later life after the death of their mother, Margaret looked after her sister although **Margaret herself suffered from bouts of eccentricity**. A visitor from Ipswich summed up their situation: “**Margaret is odd in her behaviour and her sister quite deranged.**”

### **References**

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/gainsborough-the-artists-daughter-mary-n05638>



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Margaret and Mary Gainsborough, the Artist's daughters*, c.1774, 248.7 x 150 cm, private collection

- **Gainsborough moved to London in 1774** beginning the **final, triumphant stage of his career**. He took up residence in the heart of West End Society in **Schomberg House, Pall Mall** and this painting may have been painted to adorn its walls. For the first time his daughters look every inch fine ladies, which was fitting for the grand-daughters of a duke and the children of one of the most popular and wealthiest artists who was also now a founding member of the Royal Academy.
- By the end of the 1770s Gainsborough had achieved **the highest goal of a portrait painter when he secured the patronage of the royal family**. He painted five portraits of his wife which were, according to family legend, wedding anniversary presents.
- This the only one of the six double portraits that can be described as finished as well as being the largest and most formal. The inclusion of the dog is unusual as it symbolises fidelity and is normally associated with marriage portraits. Gainsborough may be signalling their emotional closeness.
- **It seems that both sisters had delusions of grandness because of their mother's paternity. Gainsborough described them both as having 'airs' and speaks of their**

pride, insolence and disobedience. In later life Mary fancied herself as royalty and would receive no untitled visitors so people who had business with her would invent titles. It seems they looked down on their father as a lowly artist.



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

- Although this talk is about his family portraits, I will include the portraits of a few family friends. This portrait of Mr and Mrs Andrews is perhaps the most famous.

### Gainsborough's Friends

- Another early and well-known painting that combines his portrait work with his landscape work.
- This portrait is the masterpiece of Gainsborough's early years. 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. The **lighting, the colour balance, the cloud formations and the sweep of the landscape revealing All Saints, Sudbury** where they married creates a perfect composition. He has a gun under his arm, while his wife sits on an elaborate Rococo-style wooden bench. Their costumes were most likely painted from dressed-up artist's mannequins, which may account

for their **doll-like appearance**, and the landscape would have been studied separately.

- The painting of **Mrs Andrews's lap is unfinished** as there is a mysterious unpainted area in her lap. It has been suggested that it was reserved for a later addition. A brown brushstroke suggests that a **cock pheasant** was to be placed there, despite the painting probably (from the state of the corn) being set before the legal start of the pheasant season on September 1st. Perhaps more likely is a **work bag for embroidery**, 'tattooing or knotting', as is often seen in portraits, **a book, a fan, a lapdog, or even a baby yet to be born**—their first child was a daughter born in 1751.
- The painting follows the fashionable convention of the conversation piece, a (usually) small-scale portrait showing two or more people, often out of doors. The emphasis on the landscape here allows Gainsborough to display his skills as a painter of convincingly changing weather and naturalistic scenery, still a novelty at this time.
- The reaction of critics and art historians tells us more about the nature of art criticism than the painting.
  - Sir John Rothenstein in 1947 wrote '**there are few interpretations of civilized man in his relations with cultivated nature more lovely or psychologically profound**', and other writers have developed the analysis of themes of fertility, abundance and interest in nature in the work.
  - Kenneth Clark in *Landscape into Art* (1949) wrote '**this enchanting work is painted with such love and mastery ...**',
  - but Marxist art critic John Berger in his *Ways of Seeing* (1972) said Mr and Mrs Andrews are 'not a couple in nature as Rousseau imagined nature. **They are landowners and their proprietary attitude towards what surrounds them is visible in their stance and expressions.**' This has been picked up by others and it is now seen as an important example of the capitalist property relations of the eighteenth century with no farm-workers in sight, the sweep of the owned countryside and the impassive, aristocratic sneer of property ownership. Mr Andrews is showing his possessions, his dog, his gun, his wife and his country estate.
  - In contrast, Andrew Graham-Dixon finds the painting '**in its quiet, understated way, one of the masterpieces of erotic painting**'; Robert's 'clothes are almost falling off him, they are so loose and floppy' while Frances 'has a **melted, languorous** ['dreamy or 'sensual'] **look about her**'.
  - For Erica Langmuir it is "Out of these conventional ingredients Gainsborough has composed **the most tartly lyrical** ['sharply emotional'] **picture in the history of art**. Mr Andrews's satisfaction in his well-kept farmlands is as nothing to the intensity of the **painter's feeling** for the gold and green of fields and copses, the **supple curves of fertile land** meeting the stately clouds. The figures **stand out brittle against that glorious yet**

**ordered bounty.** But how marvellously the **acid blue hooped skirt** is deployed, almost, but not quite, rhyming with the curved bench back, the **pointy silk shoes in sly communion with the bench feet**, while Mr Andrews's substantial shoes converse with tree roots. More rhymes and assonances link the lines of gun, thighs, dog, calf, coat; a coat tail answers the hanging ribbon of a sun hat; something jaunty in the husband's tricorne catches the corner of his wife's eye. Deep affection and naive artifice combine to create the earliest successful depiction of a truly English idyll.'

- '... concern for effect never replaced observation for Gainsborough. Trained in London in the 1740s, when Hogarth was at the height of his fame, he adopted that artist's habit of sharp observation, insisting that likeness should remain the principle aim of a portrait. This was not simply to demonstrate mimetic skills. It was in order to grasp mood and personality. He was noted for his accuracy in capturing that subtle play of expression known as 'countenance'. When he left London to set up a practice in his native Suffolk he sometimes used this skill to devastating effect in depicting the local gentry. **His masterpiece of this period, *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*, shows a smart young couple in front of the land that was the source of their affluence. The smug superiority in their glances can't be bettered. Gainsborough had known both sitters since childhood – though as a social inferior, the son of a bankrupt. Perhaps he was paying them back.**' (Tate website – Gainsborough's Modernity)

## References

- Web Gallery of Art



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Elizabeth and Mary Linley (The Linley Sisters)*, c.1772, retouched 1785, 199 x 153.5 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery  
 Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Portrait of Sir Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, c. 1785, 71.1 x 61cm, The Frick Pittsburgh

- This double portrait of Elizabeth and Mary Linley, is the only known painting depicting both sisters together, each other's closest companions. Gainsborough moved to Bath in 1759 and became **good friends with the Linley family**; he did a series of portraits of the Linley family from the late 1760s until 1789. **Elizabeth the eldest wears a pale blue** underdress and overdress and gazes into the distance, with her hands **resting on a guitar**. **Mary wears a golden brown** under and overdress and engages with viewer with a **score sheet on her lap**.
- The Linley family were a **famous musical family** known as 'The Nest of the **Nightingales**'. Elizabeth was known for her **voice and beauty**, appearing first as a singer in 1767 in **Covent Garden** and she soon escalated to being one of the most highly sought-after singer of oratorios. Mary made her public debut as an **actress at Theatre Royal**, Covent Garden in 1769 and then followed in her sister's footsteps as a singer of oratorios in 1771. Both sisters were **forbidden to sing in public once married**, and therefore Elizabeth retired at eighteen and Mary at

twenty-two, depriving the music world of their beautiful voices.

- **Elizabeth's dramatic love life was the talk of society**, she broke off her engagement to Walter Long in 1771, reputedly because of an **affair with Captain Thomas Mathews**, a married friend of the family, but by 1772 it is believed that **she fled to France with Richard Brinsley Sheridan** acting as her escort, to distance herself from Mathews and to **enter a convent in Lille**. Prior to her marriage to Sheridan in London on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1773, Mathews and Sheridan **fought two duels** for her hand. Mathew had written an article defaming the character of Elizabeth. In the event Mathew lost his sword and had to beg for his life and sign a retraction of the article. Because the apology was made public Mathew challenged Sheridan to another duel. This time was much more aggressive and both men broke their swords, and both were wounded. Sheridan had part of Mathew's sword sticking through his ear, his whole body was covered in wounds and his face beaten to jelly yet eight days later he was out of danger.
- Gainsborough carried out this painting between early 1771 and March 1772. In 1785 upon the request of the Linley family, he **re-touched the painting to depict the sitters in the fashion of the 1780s** (showing the danger of dating paintings from the fashion). It appears that **Mary had not been satisfied with the likeness**, however when it returned to the Linley household on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1785, Mary wrote to Elizabeth 'I found our picture come home from **Gainsbro's very much improved** and freshened up. My father and mother are **quite in raptures** with it; indeed it is in *my* opinion, the best and handsomest of you that I have ever seen.' What we currently see today is combination of Gainsborough's own hand 1771-2 and 1785.

### References

- Dudley Picture Gallery





Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), *Portrait of Mrs Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (1754-1792), c. 1785-1786, 220 × 154 cm, National Gallery of Art

Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), *Elizabeth Linley, Mrs Richard Brinsley Sheridan as Saint Cecilia* (1754-1792), 1775, Waddesdon Manor

- **As just mentioned, Elizabeth Ann Linley was a singer** who enjoyed success in Bath and London before **marrying Richard Sheridan** in 1773. She **died of tuberculosis aged 38** seven years after this portrait. Both her parents were musicians and she started singing in public when she was nine and made her debut at Covent Garden when she was 13. She was betrothed to a wealthy suitor, but the engagement was broken, and she received £3,000 in compensation. She was described as '**infinitely superior to all other English singers**'. Gainsborough was a friend of the family and she was the model for **Joshua Reynolds's *St Cecilia*** which he described as '**the best picture I ever painted**'.
- Gainsborough combines his love of landscape with portraiture in a work with a strong Romantic component. Her calm and precisely delineated face is the centre of a swirling world of long, delicate, free flowing brushstrokes. She is an isolated and lonely figure in a windswept landscape with elements, such as her hair reflecting the leaves and the pink of her dress the sunset, that merge the figure

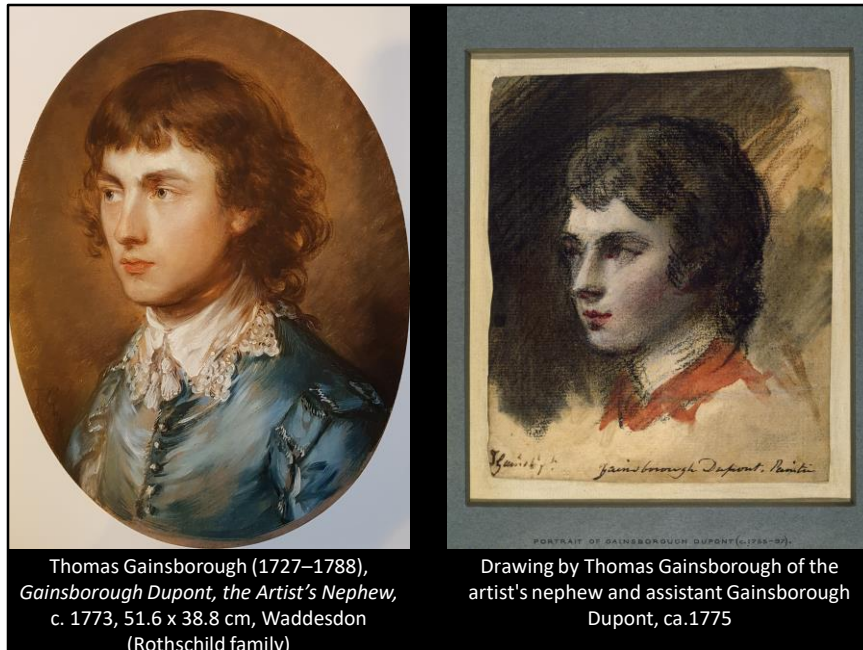
with the landscape.

### **Notes**

- There is another painting by Joshua Reynolds of *Mrs Sheridan as St Cecilia* which was **recently deaccessioned by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)** for \$650,000. LACMA sold the painting and a Cranach in order to purchase other works. There is a voluntary codes of ethics in the museum world that say it is unacceptable to deaccession ('sell') works from a collection unless the money is used to buy other works. This ensures the value of works in the public domain does not diminish.

### **References**

- <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.99.html>



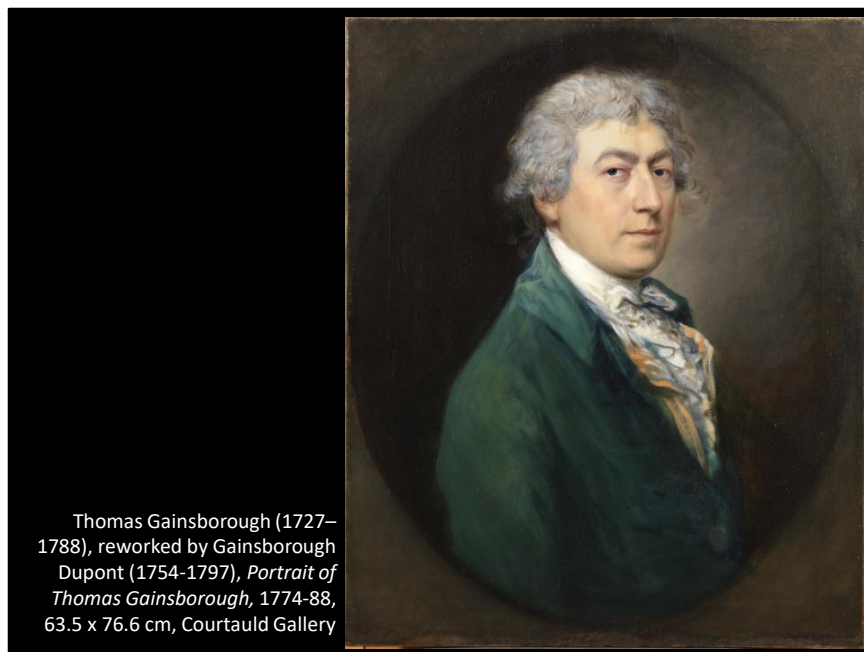
Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Gainsborough Dupont, the Artist's Nephew*, c. 1773, 51.6 x 38.8 cm, Waddesdon (Rothschild family)

Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Gainsborough Dupont*, c. 1775, drawing, water-colour and chalk, varnished, bequeathed by Claude D. Rotch

- Gainsborough Dupont (1754-1797, died age 43) was born in Sudbury, Suffolk, the eldest son of Gainsborough's sister Sarah, and her husband Philip Dupont. In 1772 Dupont was apprenticed to Gainsborough, for whom he continued to work until the latter's death in 1788. **He was the only assistant Gainsborough is ever known to have employed.** He also trained at the Royal Academy Schools, where he became a student in March 1775. Dupont took over Gainsborough's studio in Schomberg House in 1788, and moved to Bloomsbury in 1793, following the death of Gainsborough's widow. He painted portraits and landscapes in a style of similar to that of his uncle, and also landscapes with architectural ruins, in which he imitated Nicolas Poussin.
- The painting of his **Dupont** is a bravura display of Gainsborough's powers by **taking less than an hour** to paint this portrait. It was described by an artist friend as 'more like the work of God than man' although Gainsborough choice of **17<sup>th</sup>-century costume suggest he had a more down to earth ambition to emulate Van**

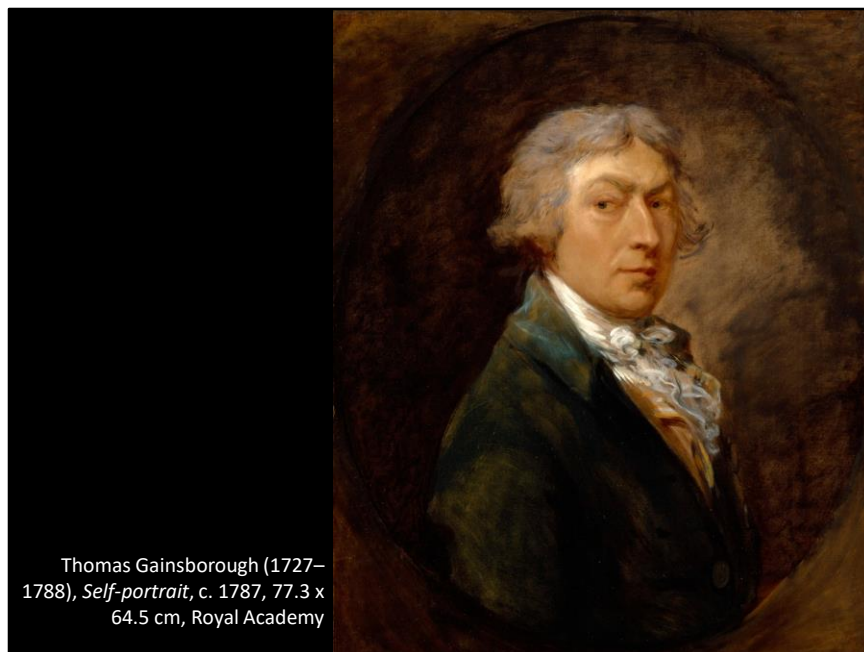
**Dyck.** The painting soon entered the collection of an aristocratic connoisseur.

- Drawing by Thomas Gainsborough of the artist's nephew and assistant Gainsborough Dupont, ca.1775.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), reworked by Gainsborough Dupont (1754-1797), *Portrait of Thomas Gainsborough*, 1774-88, 63.5 x 76.6 cm, Courtauld Gallery

- ‘The status of this portrait has long been unclear but recent conservation revealed that the **face was most likely painted by Gainsborough himself** when he was in his mid-forties. The painting was **left unfinished when he died** and was **later completed by his nephew and close collaborator, Gainsborough Dupont**. The latter copied the jacket Gainsborough wore in the self-portrait presented to the Royal Academy in 1787. Samuel Courtauld purchased this work as a companion to the portrait of Gainsborough’s wife (also in the Courtauld collection).’ (Permanent collection label)



Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Self-portrait*, c. 1787, 77.3 x 64.5 cm, Royal Academy

- Painted the year before he died. 'Gainsborough painted this self-portrait as a gift for one of his closest friends, the German-born composer Carl Friedrich Abel, who unfortunately died before the picture was completed. Abel was taught by J. S. Bach in Germany and came to England to be chamber-musician to Queen Charlotte in 1764. He and Johann Christian Bach established the first subscription concert in England and many of Hady's work were first performed there.
- The following year, **when Gainsborough was terminally ill, he left written instructions that this unfinished '¾ sketch' intended for Abel was to be the only likeness of his features that he would sanction to be engraved after his death - in effect, nominating it as the image by which he wished to be remembered.** One reason for his choice may been the picture's painterly bravura - what the Morning Herald of 28 December 1788 described as its '**freedom & bold stile**'. But the image also conveys something of the character that Philip Thicknesse ascribed to Gainsborough, as a person who '**knows, as well how to act, and think, like a gentleman, as he does to condemn and despise those who dare to treat him in any other light**'. The sharpness of the scrutiny to which Gainsborough subjects

himself, and with which he confronts the viewer, is certainly anything but modest or ingratiating. ' (*Gainsborough's Family Album*, exhibition catalogue, David Solkin, p.174)

- Gainsborough died of 'cancer of the neck' and is buried in St Anne's churchyard in Kew.



**Art History Revealed – Wednesday 26 September, half-term 31 October – 5 December, Wednesday 9 January – 13 March (no half-term)**

#### **Exhibitions in Start Date Order**

1. Impressionism in London, Tate Britain, 2 November 2017 – 7 May 2018
2. Modigliani, Tate Modern, 23 November 2017 – 2 April 2018
3. Charles I: King and Collector, Royal Academy, 27 January – 15 April 2018
4. All Too Human Bacon, Freud and a century of painting life, Tate Britain, 28 February – 27 August 2018
5. Victorian Giants: The Birth of Art Photography, National Portrait Gallery, 1 March – 20 May 2018
6. Picasso 1932 - Love, Fame, Tragedy, Tate Modern, March 8 to September 9, 2018
7. Monet & Architecture, National Gallery, 9 April – 29 July 2018
8. Rodin and the Art of Ancient Greece, British Museum, 26 April – 29 July 2018
9. Aftermath Art in the Wake of World War One, Tate Britain, 5 June – 16 September 2018
10. The Great Spectacle: 250 Years of the Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy, 12 June 2018 – 19 August 2018
11. Mantegna and Bellini, National Gallery 1 October 2018 – 27 January 2019



12. Burne-Jones, Tate Britain, 24 October 2018 – 24 February 2019
13. Klimt/Schiele, Drawings from the Albertina Museum, Vienna, Royal Academy, 4 November 2018 – 3 February 2019
- 14. Lorenzo Lotto Portraits, 5 November 2018 – 10 February 2019**
15. Gainsborough's Family Album, National Portrait Gallery, 22 November 2018 - 3 February 2019
16. Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). Tate Britain, March 2019. Van Gogh and Britain will be the first exhibition to take a new look at the artist through his relationship with Britain. It will explore how Van Gogh was inspired by British art, literature and culture throughout his career and how he in turn inspired British artists, from Walter Sickert to Francis Bacon.

### **Ideas**

- Gothic Revival, based on an Andrew Graham Dixon TV programme but without the references to the literature of the period
- The Invention of Antiquity – refers to ideas in Mary Beard and John Henderson, *Classical Art from Greece to Rome*, Oxford History of Art Series, 2001, Nigel Spivey, *Understanding Greek Sculpture: Ancient Meanings, Modern Readings*, 1997 and John Boardman, *Greek Art*, Thames & Hudson, 1996
- The Painting War: Michelangelo versus Leonardo – described in the novel *Oil and Marble*, released on 5 July, 2018, and *The Lost Battles: Leonardo, Michelangelo and the Artistic Duel That Defined the Renaissance*
- The Turner Prize

### **London Galleries**

Wallace  
 British Museum  
 Hayward  
 National Gallery  
 National Portrait Gallery  
 White Cube  
 Serpentine  
 Tate Britain  
 Tate Modern  
 Royal Academy  
 Estorics