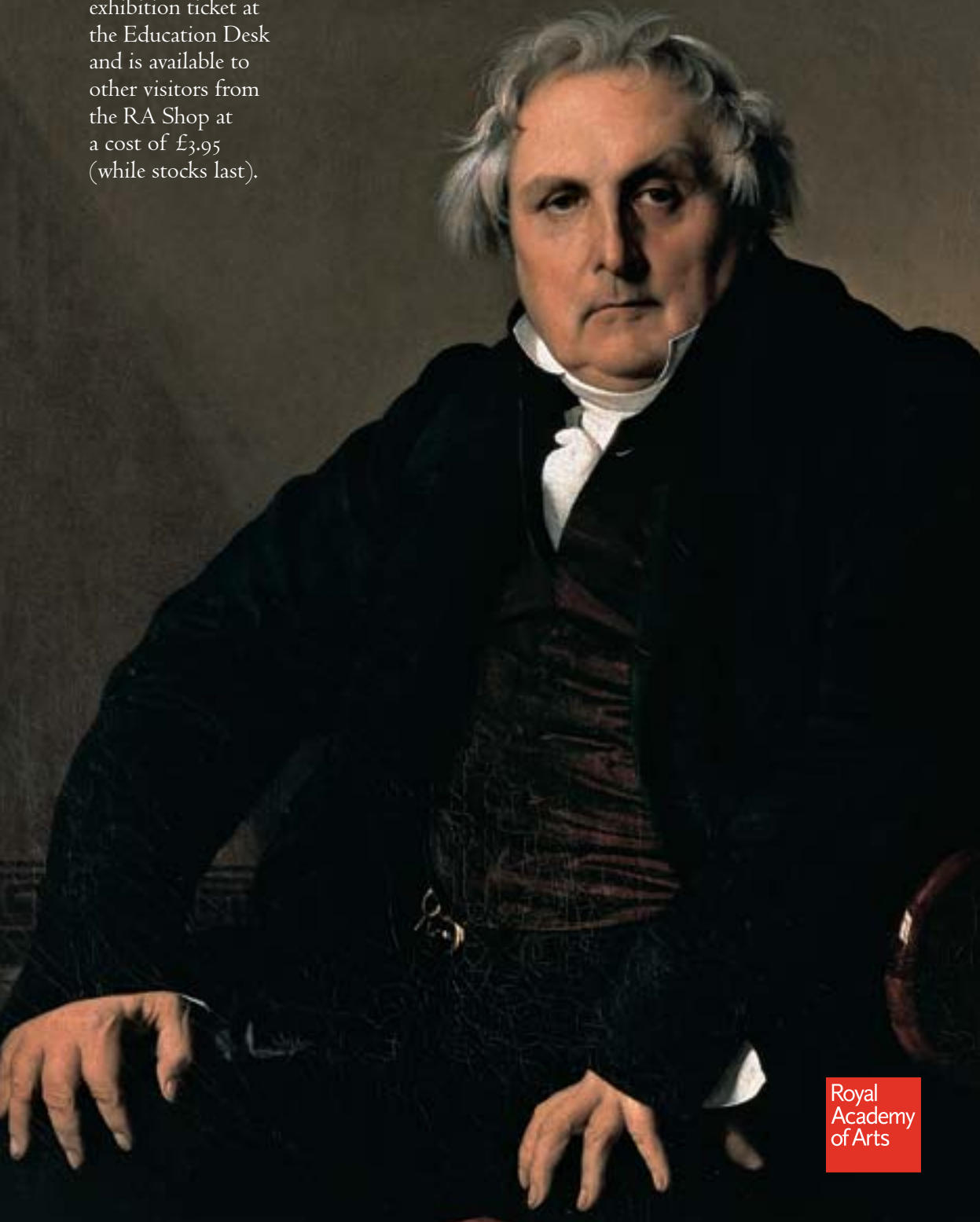


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Royal  
Academy  
of Arts

# CITIZENS *and* KINGS



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PORTRAITS IN THE  
AGE OF REVOLUTION, 1760–1830

MAIN GALLERIES  
3 FEBRUARY – 20 APRIL 2007

## An Introduction to the Exhibition for Teachers and Students

Written by Greg Harris  
For the Education Department

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Front cover

FRANCISCO DE GOYA Y LUCIENTES  
*Ferdinand VII in Royal Robes* (detail cat.11)  
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, 735  
Photo: All rights reserved © Museo Nacional  
del Prado, Madrid

Back cover

JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES  
*Louis-François Bertin* (detail cat.156)  
Département des Peintures,  
Musée du Louvre, Paris, RF 1071  
Photo: © RMN/Blot, Paris

Royal  
Academy  
of Arts

Designed by Isambard Thomas, London  
Printed by Cloister?????

*'The citizens of Rome placed the images of their ancestors in the vestibules of their houses, so that, whenever they went in or out, these venerable busts met their eyes, and recalled the glorious actions of the dead to fire the living, to excite them to imitate, and even to emulate, their great forefathers.'*

VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE, 1749

## Introduction

It may be some leap of the imagination from the austere virtues of ancient Rome to the bedroom adorned with images of film stars, footballers, models and singers, but there are parallels to be found. The sense in which an image can act as a substitute for the person represented enhances our hope that somehow their magic will rub off on us.

It is a small step from the images on the bedroom wall to the collections of engraved portraits that so preoccupied Englishmen in the later eighteenth century and helped to give them a sense of national identity and social structure.

While modern-day celebrities, in the face of a voracious media, struggle to control their representation through fashion or body image, the people who sat for portrait painters may have felt they had the upper hand in how they were represented. There were, however, other considerations apart from a good likeness. Artistic conventions had developed ways in which certain types of people were portrayed, so that likeness could become subservient to the recognition of type. Some artists saw the need for a likeness as a mere imitation of nature to be at odds with their wish to create a more idealised representation of humanity. If indeed the subject needed, or wanted, a degree of flattery, the instinctive procedures of individual artists often produced a 'family' likeness in their range of portraits.

While state portraiture had an obvious public function, the more private commissioning of individual portraits could also have a public impact. Before the aristocratic or family portrait took its carefully appointed place with the other ancestors, it would also have been on display at the Paris Salon or the Royal Academy. Painters were keen to have the image engraved as an advertisement for their work, and these prints would be collected individually or in bound volumes and thus would contribute to a wider sense of self and national image.

*'An History-painter paints man in general; a Portrait-Painter, a particular man, and consequently a defective model . . . Thus if a portrait-painter is desirous to raise and improve his subject, he has no other means than by approaching it to a general idea. He leaves out all the minute breaks and peculiarities in the face, and changes the dress from a temporary fashion to one more permanent, which has annexed to it no ideas of meanness from its being familiar to us.'*

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS,  
1771

## Citizens and Kings 1760–1830

The period covered by this exhibition saw enormous changes in all aspects of people's lives. The development of trade, the growth of Empire, urbanisation and the impact of the industrial revolution, brought on by scientific discoveries and technological invention, created new centres of wealth and new kinds of people who acquired it. Spurred on by scientific thought, the Enlightenment philosophers urged the use of reason in their questioning of the claims of State and Church, the position of the individual, or the basis of the organisation of society and the family.

Politically, the success of Enlightenment ideas was embodied in the new state of America, founded in 1776 on the rights of man to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness', though not for their slaves. And while Enlightenment ideals may have had the potential to run aground on the worst excesses of the French Revolution, they survived the inevitable reaction to that period of violence and terror. The ending of the Napoleonic Wars saw the restoration of monarchical absolutism in many countries and an attempt to batten down the democratic ideas of the period. Yet by 1830 France had a new 'citizen-king', Louis-Philippe, and Britain was two years away from the Great Reform Act.

The ways in which people chose to represent themselves, and the manner by which artists found new forms to do so, provides us with a parallel insight into a turbulent historical period.

## Portraits of Sovereigns and Heads of State

The most important portrait of the monarch was made at the time of his or her coronation, since this was the moment when the human individual took on the awesome responsibilities of royal authority. This dual representation of person and power meant that the symbols of royal majesty, the crown, sceptre, orb and sword of state, became as important as the actual likeness of the monarchs themselves, and both needed an appropriate setting. The prototype had been established in seventeenth-century France, and was always a full-length portrait, set in a spacious interior with classical columns and billowing curtain, and with gilt furniture on which

important objects could be placed. Antoine-François Callet's (1741–1823) portrait of Louis XVI (cat.8) provides a splendid example. In England, where 'divine right' had been curbed by the constitutional settlement of 1688, there was greater restraint.

The strength of this formula can be seen in what at first glance might be regarded as an inappropriate application, Gilbert Stuart's (1755–1828) portrait of George Washington (cat.5). Here it is only the sombre clothing that Washington wears, combined with the books and legal documents, that reminds us that power resides in the new American Constitution, on which his position as President depends.

The continuous flow of formal royal portraits throughout the reign was countered by a softer regal image. The influence of Dutch group portraiture, with its emphasis on civic virtue as well as on family pleasures, encouraged aristocratic families in England and France to commission similar 'conversation' pieces. In England, the royal family of George III could be presented in more relaxed, informal situations, allowing their subjects to identify with their humanity rather than their authority.

The military exploits of the most powerful ruler of the period, Napoleon, enabled artists to produce many images of the great man as Hero. In his role as Emperor, there is a conflict between his new status and his previous position as Consul of the Republic. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) draws on images of Greek gods or medieval images of Christ in his portrait of Napoleon (cat.12). His stress on the symbolic functions of the role, at the expense of the human, underlines the authoritarian nature of the régime. In contrast, Jacques-Louis David, (1748–1825) (cat.24) depicts Napoleon as a man who has worked through the night for the good of his subjects, defended both by the wisdom of his laws and the strength of his sword.

For the sculptor, the equestrian monument and the outdoor public statue required an emphasis on traditional images of royal power, but in the portrait bust there was a greater interest in characterisation and personality. Louis-Simon Boizot's (1743–1809) bust of Marie Antoinette (fig.1, cat.9) shows her as a lady of fashion with an elaborate hairstyle, topped by a rose-studded veil and tiara. Ringlets of hair caress her much admired neck, and her bejewelled gown and fleurs-de-lis cloak create an aura of regal elegance which supports the realistic representation of her features.

fig. 1  
LOUIS-SIMON BOIZOT  
*Marie-Antoinette,  
Queen of France*

1781  
marble  
90.5 × 53.6 × 36 cm

Département des Sculptures, Musée  
du Louvre, Paris, RF 4515  
Photo: © RMN\Ojeda, Paris



Cat. 11  
FRANCISCO DE  
GOYA Y LUCIENTES  
*Ferdinand VII in Royal Robes*

c.1815  
Oil on canvas  
208 × 142.5 cm

Museo Nacional del Prado,  
Madrid, 735  
Photo: All rights reserved © Museo  
Nacional del Prado, Madrid

Cat. 11 Ferdinand VII had become king of Spain in 1808 following the abdication of his father, Carlos IV, for whom Goya (1746–1828) had been court painter. Rapidly deposed by Napoleon, who placed his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne, Ferdinand had been forced into exile, and returned in 1814 determined to re-establish the absolutist powers of the monarchy. His preference for a different painter meant that Goya's commissions for royal portraits came from provincial governors and institutions. Denied access to the monarch, Goya used his studies for an 1808 equestrian portrait of Ferdinand as the basis for these works, which all share the same head and expression but were placed in different contexts.

Unusually, *Ferdinand VII in Royal Robes* places the king against a neutral background, which throws attention onto the bravura painting of the crimson mantle, fringed with gold, and the ermine stole with the Order of the Golden Fleece. This blur of paint contrasts with the carefully constructed naturalism of Ferdinand's face, which stresses that division between the royal body and the royal authority, but also gives us the feeling of an impostor trying on the king's clothes. Goya's realistic treatment of his royal subjects has sometimes been seen as deliberately satirical on the artist's part, but such a view is highly unlikely given the painter's desire for royal patronage.

How do you feel Ferdinand fits into the overall proportions of the canvas?

In what ways is this not a successful portrait of royal authority?

## The Status Portrait

Power, wealth, position and breeding are the defining characteristics of the status portrait, and the spectator's ability to recognise a person's place in the hierarchy was as important as a good likeness. For artists, the social rank of their sitters could often do more for their reputations than their qualities as a painter or sculptor. Early in his portrait-painting career, Goya emphasised his social deference to the Count of Floridablanca (cat.17) by including himself offering up a painting for the count's approval. Goya's uncertainty with the status portrait can be felt in his painting of the banker, Count Altimera (cat.21). A small man, the Count hovers uncomfortably





over a chair, with his arm resting on a table that dwarfs him, the extended arm blocking our view of the accessories that should contribute to an understanding of his status, which is confirmed only by the brilliantly painted costume. Such awkwardness is banished in Goya's 1798 portrait of Ferdinand Guillemardet (cat.16), where the brilliant tricolour plume of the sitter's hat and the sash round his body assert his position as the French Republic's ambassador to Spain. The studied elegance of the pose invites our appreciation of the man's importance and of the new Republic, enhanced by Goya's psychological insight.

The expansion of portraiture during this period led critics, at both the Royal Academy and the Paris Salon, to bemoan the appearance of nonentities, claiming that their presence drove out the more elevated kinds of painting, a complaint that was not applied to sitters who were portrayed to reflect their virtue and status.

**Cat. 22** Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842) was an artist who devoted herself to portraits of the aristocracy, as well as having ambitions as a history painter. The Comte de Calonne was Louis XVI's finance minister and, in keeping with conventions of the genre, is shown seated at his desk with attendant papers of state. There is, though, an unexpected liveliness in the presentation of the figure, with the relaxed turn towards the spectator, the legs crossed and the freshness of the gaze. Contemporaries felt Vigée-Lebrun had gone too far in presenting the man, rather than the position. They recognised Calonne, but not the Comptroller General.

The rich red of the embroidered chair covering and the curtain sloping in to support the figure create a sumptuous contrast with his black satin suit and blue sash. The lighting, against the dark background, emphasises the face and catches the silvery whiteness of the wig, which is in turn balanced by the white shafts of the quill pens.

Vigée-Lebrun's own self-portrait in the National Gallery in London shows her vivacious personality, and some of this spontaneity has been projected onto an aristocracy still bound by courtly artificiality.

What is the best piece of evidence of this man's importance?

The colour of the red curtain as it emerges from beneath the desk seems very subdued. Why is this important to the success of the composition?

*'If you draw persons of high character and dignity, they ought to be drawn in such an attitude, that the Portrait must seem to speak to us of themselves, and, as it were, to say to us, 'stop, take notice of me, I am that invincible King, surrounded by Majesty.' I am that valiant commander, who struck terror every where.' I am that great minister who knew all the springs of politics.'*

ROGER DE PILES, 1708

**Cat. 22**  
ELISABETH-LOUISE  
VIGÉE-LEBRUN  
*Charles-Alexandre  
de Calonne*

1784  
Oil on canvas  
149 × 128 cm

Lent by Her Majesty The Queen  
Photo: The Royal Collection  
© 2007 Her Majesty Queen  
Elizabeth II

The exhibition of the portrait prompted rumours that Vigée-Lebrun was the Count's mistress. Although she later denied this, it illustrates a source of tension that existed at this time between female artist and male sitter. Etiquette books of the period advised women that any prolonged glance at a man was inappropriate behaviour. Dr Johnson felt that 'public practice of any art, and staring in men's faces, is very indelicate in a female.' Nevertheless, female artists were associated with the genre, partly on account of their interest in individual likeness and their supposed inability to think abstractly, the quality required for the higher form of painting, namely History Painting.

In her memoirs, Vigée-Lebrun described the amorous glances thrown at her by her male sitters, a problem she solved by painting them 'with gaze averted; which prevents the sitter from looking at the painter.' Her close identification with the French court, (she painted over twenty portraits of Marie-Antoinette), and the aristocracy meant that as the Revolution progressed commissions inevitably disappeared, a problem she resolved by moving to Italy, Austria and Russia, where she could still find the aristocratic elegance she was best suited to portray.

## The Cultural Portrait

If wealth and position were the key to status, then it was the power of human thought and creativity that was celebrated in the cultural portrait, a reflection of the Enlightenment which gave equal importance to merit and talent as to wealth or breeding. The French Enlightenment philosophers such as Voltaire (1694–1778), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), and Denis Diderot (1713–1784) opposed religious, political and social intolerance with the arguments of reason, and opened up new understanding of human relationships.

The appreciation of art became an essential mark of the civilised man. While the Grand Tour to Italy might have been a preserve of the wealthy, a writer such as Johann Winckelmann (1717–1768) made available the study of Greek art to a wider audience. Writings on art and aesthetics became an essential part of the educated person's library.

Henry Raeburn's, (1756–1823) portrayal of the Scottish natural philosopher Dr James Hutton (cat.55) engages with an individual

Cat. 54

JEAN-BAPTISTE PIGALLE

*Voltaire Naked*

1776

marble

150 × 89 × 77 cm

Département des Sculptures,  
Musée du Louvre, Paris (Institut  
de France deposit), ENT. 1962.1  
Photo: Musée du Louvre,  
Paris/Philibert



whose intellectual achievements override any other kind of depiction. The severe monochrome background and muted colour concentrate attention on the contemplative head, the papers and fossils that were a demonstration of his geological theories, and the clasped hands which convey a calm confidence in the correctness of his ideas.

**Cat. 54** Poet, essayist, novelist, playwright, satirist, philosopher, Voltaire was the universal genius of the Enlightenment. Devoted to a woman of equal intelligence, though in mathematics and science, he embodied the liberal values of the age. To erect a statue to a writer while he was still alive was unheard of, but it was the plan of Diderot and other figures from the literary world, who organised a subscription for that purpose. It was Diderot who suggested to the sculptor Jean-Baptiste Pigalle (1714 – 1785) that he portray Voltaire naked. 'It is because flesh is more beautiful than the most beautiful drapery ... By portraying a person naked you distance him from the crowd, you recall a more innocent, simpler age.'

Pigalle's conception was not an idealised classical body, but that of the real man, by then advanced in years and, after modelling Voltaire's head from life, he used a veteran soldier as a guide to the figure. The emaciated, bony arms and legs make an almost shocking contrast to the elevated, serene expression of the face, but the decrepit body is redeemed by the flowing drapery which covers the back, folds over the shoulder and sweeps down between the legs. At Voltaire's feet are the mask of Comedy and the dagger of Tragedy, while the pen in his right hand and the voluminous scroll of paper assert the profusion of his work.

What point do you think Pigalle was making in the contrast between the head and the body?

Do you think this is a successful combination of the idealised and the realistic?

## The Place for Experimentation: Artists' Portraits and Self-portraits

Artists' images of themselves have always given us an insight into their understanding of their place in the world, of the

nature of their art or of a process of inner investigation. The mid-eighteenth century saw an expansion in the number of institutions devoted to the teaching and organisation of artistic practice, institutions which raised the status of the artist through their emphasis on the elevated nature of art and stressed its power to provide a moral education for the country. Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), (cat.70), presents himself in academic robes, a sheaf of papers in his hand, while by his side a bust of Michelangelo links him to a glorious past. The light falls on the bust's forehead emphasising that art is about human thought, not just brushes and paint.

Portraits of artists by other artists bridge the social gap between painter and sitter and here reveal a touching appreciation of life in the studio (cats 81 and 82), or the sense of mutual admiration displayed by Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770 – 1844) and Horace Vernet (1789–1863)(cats 79 and 80).

This admiration can be linked to the growing notion of artistic 'genius', of the artist as a person marked out by special talents. But this could also lead to the concept of the outsider: the artist who fought against the mainstream and as a consequence went unrecognised or unrewarded.

**Cat. 74** There is a certain irony in the fact that Reynolds, who preached the virtue of history painting, should have made his very comfortable living by painting portraits, and that the Irish artist, James Barry (1741–1806), who determined to be a history painter, should have died in abject poverty. His own worst enemy, Barry was paranoiac, rude to his few patrons and careless of the enemies that he made among his fellow Royal Academicians, who expelled him in 1799 from the Royal Academy, where he had held the post of Professor of Painting.

Barry had spent seven years (1777–1784) working on immense canvases for the Society of Arts depicting *The Progress of Human Culture*, a project he agreed to carry out for little more than his expenses. Although this self-portrait was finished in 1803, he had begun work on it in 1780 as a small study for part of one of these paintings. He depicts himself as the classical painter Timanthes, who was described by the Roman writer Pliny (23–79) as 'the only artist in whose works more is always implied than is depicted.' The painting he holds corresponds to a work of Timanthes, recorded by Pliny, of a sleeping, one-eyed giant, a Cyclops approached by cautious satyrs. Behind

*'I am a tolerant man,  
and I consider it a very  
good thing if people think  
differently from me.'*

*'I die adoring God,  
loving my friends, not  
bating my enemies, but  
detesting superstition.'*

VOLTAIRE



the artist is the massive foot of a statue of Hercules crushing the serpent of Envy, its open mouth hissing a last gasp into Barry's right ear.

Completed three years before he died, and denied the success that would have aroused envy, the painting seems to express the idea that Barry is nostalgically returning to a more heroic, youthful possibility.

How does Barry relate himself to the Cyclops?

What might the image of a one-eyed giant represent to the artist?

Cat. 74  
JAMES BARRY  
*Self-portrait as Timanthes*

Begun c.1780,  
completed 1803  
Oil on canvas  
76 × 63,5 cm

National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin  
Photo: National Gallery of Ireland,  
Dublin 971

## The Family Portrait

Earlier images of the family had concentrated on the importance of dynastic continuity, with the representation of wives and children subordinate to the dominating father. The writings of John Locke (1632–1704) and Rousseau saw children not as mini-adults, but as products of nature needing their own space for play and education and the demonstrable affection of their parents. That expression of feeling was encouraged by the Enlightenment belief in sensibility, the capacity to relate to others and to one's surroundings through the emotions.

This sense of communication between family members in a picture such as that by Henry Walton (1746–1813) (cat.88) encourages the viewer to enter into an imagined narrative of their domestic felicity. Pictures of motherhood could stress not a dynastic continuity, but the lively relationship between mother and child. The painting of a child as a child, rather than as a little adult became a genre in itself with an emphasis on the depiction of character. In a reversal of gender roles, where the wife is usually shown mourning the loss of her husband, Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1739–1808) portrays his subject leaning against his late wife's tomb with an expression of deepest melancholy (cat.95).

Cat. 91 (not shown in the exhibition) Philipp Otto Runge's (1777–1810) portrait of his parents may seem slightly at odds with the domestic intimacies discussed above, but it was painted at a time of acute national crisis during the Napoleonic Wars. Runge was a German romantic artist who believed in a deep affinity between man and nature, which he expressed in a variety of symbolic ways. His

project the *Four Times of Day* links time, nature and the seasons with the stages of human life. His group portrait, *We Three* (destroyed by fire), a gift to his parents, had shown Runge, his wife and his brother Daniel affectionately posed in a garden setting in which the sheltering trees bind the characters together.

It is possible that this portrait of his parents may have been intended as a reminder for their grandchildren of their presence. An initial oil sketch of his mother's face showed a sympathetic study of old age, but is replaced in the final painting by a more troubled frown. The sense of stoical dignity in the old couple, with their dark and sombre clothes, and the grandfather's old fashioned wig, contrasts with the hopeful expectancy of the children. Runge's

Cat. 91  
PHILIPP OTTO RUNGE  
*The Artist's Parents*

1806  
Oil on canvas  
74 × 50 cm  
Kunsthalle, Hamburg 1001



extremely detailed representation of natural forms and his emphasis on the solidity of the children's bodies and heads gives them an inner radiance. The youngest boy points to the stamens of the lily, the source of regeneration and symbol of hope, while the older boy looks to his grandmother for approval. The grandparents sense of pre-occupation with the troubled times in which they live suggests the possibility of a fracture in family and national continuity.

Does the view of the shipyard seem a natural progression into the distance? Or do you have a feeling of an inner and outer space?

What effect does the grandfather's hat and cane have on his relation with the children?

What might the stones and other plants in the foreground suggest?

fig 2  
JOSEPH NOLLEKENS  
*Charles James Fox*

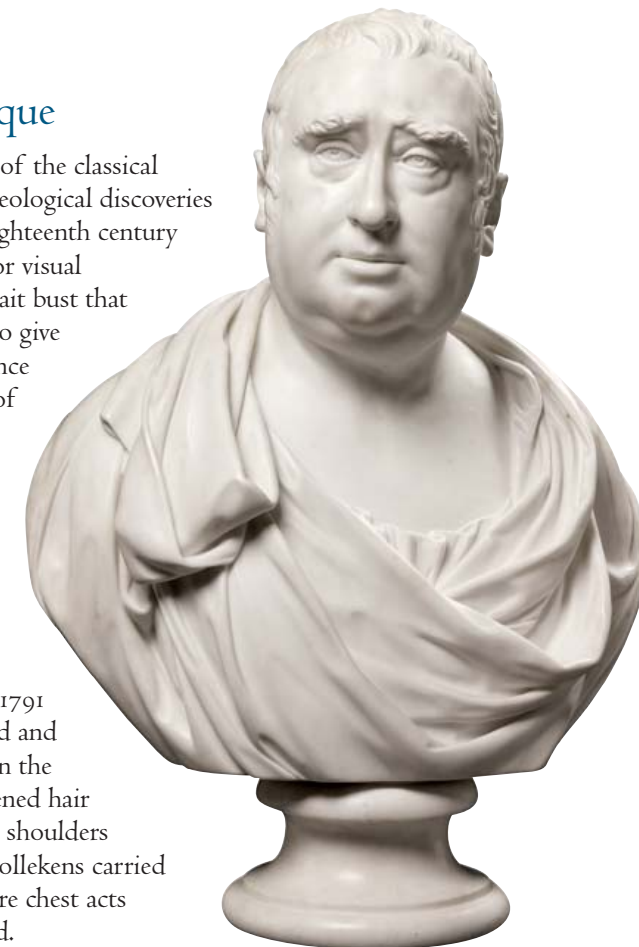
c. 1802  
marble  
72 × 52 × 34 cm

Victoria and Albert Museum  
A.1-1945  
Photo: V&A Images/  
Victoria and Albert Museum

## The Portrait after the Antique

The architecture, sculpture and philosophy of the classical past had shaped the Renaissance. The archaeological discoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeii during the eighteenth century revived interest in the Antique as a model for visual expression. It informed a taste for the portrait bust that drew on classical Roman models intended to give the sitter an authority derived from a reference to ancient classical virtue. The idealisation of the features and the avoidance of contemporary clothing linked the sitter with a virtuous past.

The politician Charles James Fox (1749–1806) was frequently depicted by satirists as scruffy and unshaven. The three busts by Joseph Nollekens (1737–1823) show Fox as his supporters would have preferred to see him. The first, dating from 1791 (cat.114) is more animated, with head turned and flowing hair. It is less classical in feeling than the second (fig.2, cat.115). Here, the short, flattened hair and more controlled drapery that covers his shoulders create a more severe impression, one that Nollekens carried to greater lengths with cat.116, where the bare chest acts simply as a geometrical support for the head.



Cat. 37  
STUDIO OF JACQUES-  
LOUIS DAVID  
*The Death of Marat*

c.1794  
Oil on canvas  
162 × 130 cm

Département des Peintures,  
Musée du Louvre, Paris, RF 1945-2.  
Bequest of Baron Jeanin, a  
descendant of the artist, 1945  
Photo: © RMN/Blot and  
Jean, Paris

Cat. 37 Placed in a gallery full of sculpture, our next painting takes on some of the qualities of a sculptural funeral monument. Jacques-Louis David's early paintings of Roman Republican virtue, *The Oath of the Horatii* and of Brutus and his dead sons, had described a stoical determination to put country before family and personal happiness, to sacrifice life for the greater good. With the outbreak of the French Revolution, David was the chief propagandist for the radical party of reformers, the Jacobins, and Jean-Paul Marat (1743–1793) was a journalist who supported this faction's struggle against the rival Girondins, urging the execution of all half-hearted supporters of the Revolution.

Marat, who did much of his work seated in a warm bath-tub to alleviate the symptoms of a painful skin disease, was stabbed to death by Charlotte Corday, a Girondist sympathiser. The opportunity to turn this event into an image that would proclaim the sanctity of revolutionary virtue, and the continuing threat to it from its enemies, was immediately apparent to David, who presented his painting to France's revolutionary governing body, the Convention four months after Marat's death.

By pushing the action right to the front of the picture plane, and by concentrating on the essential details – knife, pen, letter, wound – David draws the spectator into an immediate reading of the situation. The Spartan conditions of Marat's life makes links to the death of a classical hero, but David also draws on Christian imagery to move his audience. Marat's right arm, falling over the side of the tub, recalls Christ taken down from the cross or placed in his tomb. The strongly directed light illuminates the transfigured face, and the blood on the white cloth suggests a sacrificial altar.

In Marat's hand, David has placed the introductory letter in which Corday, his assassin wrote, 'I am sufficiently unhappy to have a right to your protection.' David invites our sympathy for the fallen hero by altering a word so that the letter now reads 'I am sufficiently unhappy to have the right to your benevolence', a benevolence further strengthened by the note placed on the wooden block in which Marat sends money to a widow whose husband has died defending his country.

David has portrayed a specific event, which took place at a precise time. How does his treatment of the background contradict this?

How do the white cloth, wrapped around his head, and his bare torso affect our view of Marat?





An engraving was immediately made of the original picture to encourage its widest circulation, and this version is a copy made in David's studio from which tapestries would be made. Unable to resist a final propagandist twist, David altered the simple dedication on the wooden block in the original version so that it now reads: 'Unable to corrupt me, they assassinated me.'

## The Allegorical Portrait

An allegorical portrait presents a sitter in the guise of a mythological or historical figure, such that the attributes of this person are appropriated by the sitter. Artists could indulge in a greater degree of idealisation, and choose settings and props suitable for the situation, and in so doing moved the portrait genre closer to that of history painting. The idea for this type of representation did not just come from the artist. Luke Gardiner MP, who was shortly to marry one of the Montgomery sisters, appealed to Reynolds's sense of poetic invention by commissioning a group portrait of the three sisters 'representing some emblematical or historical subject.' *Three Ladies Adorning a Term of wHymen*' (cat.125) turns a pagan rite of fertility into an acceptable bridal allegory in which the sisters play their parts.

While allegory flattered the status of the sitter, it was also applied to images of women like actresses, thus making them socially acceptable. Sarah Siddons, England's leading tragic actress, confessed herself 'an ambitious candidate for fame', and anxious to meet 'all the good, the wise, the talented, the rank and fashion of the age' at Reynolds's parties.

**Cat. 130** Rather than portray Sarah Siddons in one of her stage roles, Reynolds pulls out all the stops in casting her as the Tragic Muse. Melpomene was one of nine Muses, daughters of Jupiter, who were the goddesses of creative inspiration in poetry, song and the other arts. In her memoirs, Siddons described how she naturally assumed the pose, but Reynolds use of earlier models like Domenichino's, (1581–1641) *St John the Evangelist*, or Michelangelo's (1475–1564), *Isaiah on the Sistine ceiling*, suggest that this is unreliable.

Siddons is seated on an enormous throne, supported by stormy clouds and set against an ominously dark sky, her sumptuous dress

**Cat. 130**  
**SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS**  
*Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse*

1789  
 Oil on canvas  
 239.7 × 147.6 cm

By Permission of the Trustees of  
 Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

spread out to command the stage. Beside her are two figures associated with Tragedy: on the right Terror, for which Reynolds used a drawing of his own face, and on the left Pity. While Siddons's idealised features gaze rapturously upwards in a somewhat aloof manner, there is a sense in which her image 'speaks' to us: her raised hand, suggestive of oratory, rests against the cup of 'Terror', while the other hand falls away beside the dagger of 'Pity'. Thus in an intellectual, if not emotional, sense the actress's body becomes the conduit for the cathartic experience that tragedy should give us.

With its dark browns and blacks, the palette used by Reynolds is very limited. What associations with art from the past would he expect his audience to make?

How many symmetries in the matching of shapes can you find in this portrait?

The popularity of this painting and its subsequent engraving meant that when it was reproduced as a 'living picture' at every performance during a revival of *The Jubilee* at Drury Lane Theatre in the winter of 1785–6, the applause was both enthusiastic and knowing.

In contrast to *The Tragic Muse*, Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741–1828) portrays the singer Sophie Arnould in her role of the tragic heroine in Christoph Willibald Gluck's (1714–1787) opera *Iphigenia in Aulis*, (fig.3, cat.128). On the point of being sacrificed by Agamemnon, her father, so that fair winds will take the Greek fleet to Troy, Iphigenia's expressive eyes and trembling lips convey a genuine expression of pain and fear. Her costume bears no relation to what she would have worn in the theatre, its more classical folds exposing the left breast and increasing the sense of vulnerability.



fig. 3  
Jean-Antoine Houdon  
*Sophie Arnould in the  
Title Role of Gluck's  
Iphigenia in Aulis*

1775  
marble  
67 × 51 × 29,5 cm

Musée du Louvre,  
département des Sculptures  
Photo: © RMN/Paris

## Nature and Grace: The Landscape and the Figure

The contrast between the 'natural' and the 'artificial' was at the heart of Enlightenment thinking. This focus on Nature took different shapes in different countries, but would lead to new ways of picturing the landscape, and the figure within the landscape. Images that are not solely concerned with ownership, but demonstrate

a relationship in which human beings draw pleasure or inspiration from Nature, provided a confirmation of the protestant belief that the natural world was a sign of God's benevolence, in all its manifestations.

Rousseau held a more extreme belief in the corrupting forces of civilisation, which he contrasted with the innocence and happiness of primitive man living in a 'state of nature'. Although impossible to return to, in Wright of Derby's (1734–1797) image of Brooke Boothby (cat.134) we see the philosopher's friend lying in a wooded landscape, immersed in the natural surroundings and contemplating his own reactions to it. Despite Rousseau, the French remained less at home in Nature in its natural state than the English.

Cat. 136 Joseph Wright of Derby is best known for his pictures of scientific experiments incorporating dramatic lighting effects, but he was also a highly successful portrait painter who never worked in London, finding his clients in the expanding provincial centres. This portrait of the Revd d'Ewes Coke, his wife Hannah and their distant cousin, the MP Daniel Parker Coke, shows them gathered round a table in front of a clump of trees. Using a simple triangular composition, Wright places the husband at the apex, his gaze directed at his wife. The focal point of the narrative and object of discussion is the sheet of paper and its relationship to an unseen landscape.

One interpretation is that they are discussing plans for the development of their newly inherited estate, plans that no doubt would have been influenced by the work of 'Capability' Brown, who stressed the natural unfolding of the landscaping in contrast to the more rigid formality of previous conceptions. Alternatively, we may see the table as having been set up facing a particularly attractive view, which the participants have explored through the medium of drawing, thus aligning themselves with other persons of taste and sensibility who understand the importance of the Picturesque. Hannah, whose hand rests possessively on a portfolio, from which peeps a study of trees, may be the author of the drawing they discuss, and her husband's regard may indicate his praise. Since he also holds a drawing instrument, he may alternatively be offering an explanation of his artistic intentions.

In their negotiations with the artist about the way in which the sitters wished to be presented, such doubts about

*'They were viewing the country with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing, and decided on its capability of being formed into pictures, with all the eagerness of real taste. Here Catherine was quite lost. She knew nothing of drawing—nothing of taste—and she listened to them with an attention which brought her little profit, for they talked in phrases which conveyed scarcely any idea to her.'*

JANE AUSTEN,  
*Northanger Abbey*

Cat. 136  
JOSEPH WRIGHT  
OF DERBY  
*The Reverend d'Ewes Coke  
with His Wife Hannab and  
Daniel Parker Coke MP*

c.1782  
Oil on canvas  
152.4 × 177.8 cm  
Derby Museums and Art Gallery

the narrative would not have existed, and their intentions would have been clearly stated. Unfortunately these have been lost to us.

How does Wright's use of light tell us about the probable time of day?

How has the umbrella been used in the composition?  
What does its presence tell us about the sitters' relationship with nature?

By framing the figures in front of dense trees, how does the artist force us to use our imagination?



## Portraiture from 1815 to 1830: Ideal Families and Tormented Geniuses

The inevitable reaction to the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars led to the attempt to restore some semblance of the absolutist past. Whether in the revived monarchies of France and Spain, the rigid censorship of Austria, or conservative government in Britain, there was a desire to stamp out the ideas of the recent past. If this reaction had a hollow ring to it in face of the observable realities, so too did some of the conventions of portraiture.

David, now in exile in Brussels, paints the Napoleonic general Etienne-Maurice Gérard (cat.142) with all the panoply of the traditional masculine full-length portrait. But the attention to detail transforms what should be heroic into something more prosaic, as though an ordinary mortal has borrowed clothes that do not suit him.

If the conventions of status no longer fit, the portrayal of genius takes on a new romantic urgency, whether in François Rude's, (1794–1855) posthumous bust of David, or that of the violinist Niccolò Paganini by David d'Angers (1788–1856).

The anxiety of Runge's parents has been banished in the bourgeois happiness of the Eltz family (cat.146), pictured in their summer retreat by Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793–1865). While the Eltz family may have a touch of aristocratic glamour about them, the French bourgeoisie were demanding something rather different.

Cat. 156 Louis-François Bertin was the editor of the *Journal des débats*, a periodical which had attacked both the Empire and the conservative governments of the restored Bourbon monarchy. As the voice of the liberal middle class, Bertin's influence was stronger than ever following

the accession of Louis-Philippe, whose policies he had championed before the 1830 Revolution.

Faced with a man of such power and authority, Ingres had great difficulty in finding a solution to the painting, and preparatory drawings reveal the artist trying several different poses. Frustrated by his indecision, Ingres burst into tears and was comforted by Bertin, whose gesture of sympathy and understanding removed the painter's psychological block.

Compressed as his figure is into a shallow space, it is the force of the man that immediately strikes us, his bulk hemmed in by the curve of the chair, the pleats of the waistcoat barely restraining the body beneath. His elbows are raised, so that the claw-like hands rest on his thighs with a gesture of controlled energy. The intensely observed details and the play of light and shade mould the character of the face from the severity of the mouth to the kindness suggested by the eyes, the tousled hair the expression of a man confident in his inner being, who needs no external sign of his status or profession.

To what purpose has Ingres put his use of white in this painting?

Place your hand over the right and left side of the face alternately, then describe the different characteristics you see in each side. How does this exercise affect your understanding of Monsieur Bertin?

*'What a masterpiece the portrait of Bertin is ... Ingres chose Bertin to typify an epoch; he represents him as a Buddha of the prosperous, well-fed, triumphant bourgeoisie.'*  
EDOUARD MANET, 1878

## Conclusion

The ideas of the period covered by this exhibition provide us with the foundations of the modern world as we know it. The success or setbacks encountered by these ideas, which are implicit in the images of the men and women portrayed here, varied from country to country. While the citizen in 1830 was not yet king, one has only to look at Monsieur Bertin to realise that this reversal is not far off.

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