Anthony van Dyck replaced Daniel Mytens as official royal painter from 1632 until his death in 1641. At a time when Charles I was ruling without Parliament, discover how van Dyck played an important role in royal propaganda with his portraits of the king, his queen Henrietta Maria and his growing family.

Charles I, inspired by the example of his father James I, replaced Daniel Mytens as chief royal portraitist by Anthony van Dyck in 1632. Honours were heaped on him: a knighthood, prestigious accommodation at Blackfriars and regular, well remunerated commissions.

Charles, who ruled without Parliament from 1629 to 1640, wanted a painter to project him as an absolute ruler and benign monarch. Thus he followed his fellow Netherlander Sir Peter Paul Rubens, who had taught van Dyck and offered the example of the ceiling of the Banqueting House in Whitehall as a shrine to James I, Charles’s father.

Until his death in 1641 van Dyck indulged Charles’s whims, and executed a series of masterpieces. There were portraits of Charles alone, including the famous triple portrait, which assisted the Italian sculptor Bellini in producing a bust of the king, and several equestrian pictures: Charles in the hunting field and alone on horseback (one such work shows Charles resembling the Emperor Charles V in Titian’s famous painting of 1548).

There were also representations of the king and queen together, and of the royal children— with or without their parents.

How far then should we see van Dyck in the context of the time? How much did his work pander to Charles’s needs during the “Personal Rule”? And how far should we see him as part of a continuum of royal artists? We will also consider how much he owed his style to Mytens and Holbein, and how Lely, Kneller, Reynolds and Gainsborough followed and acknowledged their debt to him.

Recommended reading
Hearn, Karen (ed), Van Dyck and Britain (Tate Britain, 2009)
Millar, Oliver, Van Dyck in England. (National Portrait Gallery, 1982)
Sharpe, Kevin, The Personal Rule of Charles I. (Yale University Press, 1992)
Additional information

This course is suitable for all, no prior knowledge is required. It allows you to spend time exploring a subject for interest, among like-minded people, without formal assessment.

Intended learning outcomes

- An understanding of the political context of van Dyck’s work in England (1632-1641).
- The ability to identify and to comment on detail within the portraits presented.
- An understanding of the place of van Dyck in a long tradition of English royal portraiture.

About the tutor

Edward Towne graduated in European Studies from the University of East Anglia, and later achieved a PGCE from Cambridge, an MA in Early Modern English History from the University of London, and MSt in Twentieth Century British History from the University of Oxford. His professional career was spent teaching History in state and independent Secondary Schools, finally as Head of the History Department. Currently, Edward lectures independently to adults in a variety of organisations, and acts as a reviewer and tour leader on historical topics.
Short Course Programme
General information, terms & conditions

How to book a place
These courses are usually very popular so you are advised to apply as soon as possible. Places cannot be held without payment of the course fee.
- **Online Booking is preferred.** Please visit www.kent.ac.uk/tonbridge
- **By post** to us at the address below, using the application form in the programme booklet. Please note that you will not receive an acknowledgment of your paper application; your payment will usually be processed when the course becomes financially viable, otherwise we will notify you of cancellation approximately seven days prior to the course. A paper application affirms acceptance of our terms & conditions.

Course cancellation
As these short courses are self-financing, each course can only proceed if there are sufficient enrolments. Therefore, if a course is cancelled due to insufficient enrolments we aim to notify applicants approximately one week before the course start date; if there is no suitable alternative course, we will refund the appropriate course fee in full. The University of Kent reserves the right to cancel a course for this or any other reason in which case the relevant course fee will be refunded in full. We advise that you do not buy books or other course materials until that particular course is confirmed as taking place: please contact us if you are unsure.

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- a course fee of up to and including £42 will incur an administrative handling fee of £10.00
- a course fee of £43 and over will incur an administrative handling fee of £12.50.

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- Parking. There is plenty of public pay and display car parking locally, but please note that only selected car parks permit parking in excess of four hours; detailed information is available from www.tmbc.gov.uk. No parking is available here on site.
- Refreshments are not provided; food and drink can be purchased from any of the nearby café outlets - we are closely situated to the High Street and town centre. A hot drink vending machine is usually available on the ground floor of this building.

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Please contact us if you have any queries or would like to register your email address to receive our course information updates. We look forward to welcoming you here soon.

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