

Van Dyck and Britain



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Together with Holbein, Anthony van Dyck (1599 -1641) is one of the most important names in British pre-18th century art. Born in Antwerp he was a precocious talent, rising swiftly to become the chief assistant to Peter Paul Rubens, then Northern Europe's most prominent painter. His importance to British art cannot be overstated;

during the turbulent years of the reign of Charles I, he single-handedly reinvented portrait painting, leaving behind a legacy that would influence later generations. Van Dyck first came to Britain in 1620 to work for James I. Between 1621 and 1627 he worked in Italy, adding to his clientele of wealthy patrons. Charles I recognised in van Dyck the potential to be the perfect creator of the royal image. The artist returned to London in April 1632 and was almost immediately knighted and provided with an enviable property and pension, becoming the chief painter of the court. His portraits of the royal family and courtiers, imbued with an understated authority and relaxed elegance, were an instant success. His pictures of Charles especially seemed to represent the king as both a powerful sovereign and 'nature's gentleman'. His popularity stemmed from his ease when moving in aristocratic circles, and his talent for flattering almost all subjects. Thomas Gainsborough famously said on his deathbed 'We are all going to heaven and van Dyck is of the company'. The authors not only explore van Dyck's years in England, but also his enduring influence on British art and culture in the centuries following his death, reflected in the way 18th and 19th century British sitters wanted their portraits to convey the gravitas and sophistication the earlier painter had mastered so well. Extensively illustrated, this is the most thorough examination ever published of van Dyck's English sojourn and the influence it had on the cultural life of the nation.

作者介绍:

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