

Van Dyck

PITTORE DI CORTE

16 NOVEMBRE 2018 / 17 MARZO 2019
TORINO, MUSEI REALI - GALLERIA SABAUDA, PIAZZETTA REALE 1



A unique exhibition on Anthony van Dyck,
the great Flemish painter who revolutionized 17th-century portraiture,
opens in Turin

PRESS RELEASE

On **16 November 2018** an extraordinary show devoted to **Anthony van Dyck** (Antwerp, 1599–London, 1641) opened to the public, in the Sale Palatine of the **Galleria Sabauda** at the Musei Reali in Turin. Van Dyck was Rubens' star pupil and one of the greatest exponents of 17th-century European art, revolutionizing the portraiture of the period. He was also an internationally famous personality, refined gentleman, charming conversationalist, brilliant artist and official painter to the most important European courts.

The exhibition **Van Dyck. Pittore di corte** ("Van Dyck, Court Painter") aims to reveal the exclusive relationship the artist enjoyed with Italian and European courts, through the **four sections** comprising it and **45 canvases and 21 engravings** on display. The artist painted masterpieces whose formal development, quality of colour, elegance and painstaking detail were unique. This enabled him to satisfy the ruling classes' need for status symbols and prestige, from the Genoese nobility to the Savoy family, from Archduchess Isabella to the courts of James I and Charles I of England.

Van Dyck's works allow us to enter the sumptuous world of the 17th century, to discover the ambitions of the personages who had themselves painted by the "glory of the world" – as Charles I described the Flemish master – in order to boost their court's image and standing.

Van Dyck spent six years in Italy, from 1621 to 1627, visiting various cities and studying Italian art and especially that of the Veneto. Here he established contacts with the Genoese aristocracy, the royals in Turin and the dukes of Florence, who commissioned works and led him to specialize in portraiture. By basing himself on Titian's models and fulfilling the celebratory needs of his clients, Van Dyck developed a completely personal genre, characterized by great formal perfection. Works like *Marchesa Elena Grimaldi Cattaneo*; *Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio*; *Emanuele Filiberto, Prince of Savoy*; *Archduchess Isabella Dressed as a Nun*; *Tomaso Francesco of Savoy, Prince of Carignano*, and *Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria* are supreme examples of his portraiture

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which, due to their naturalness and spontaneous gestures, the meticulously rendered precious silks and lace, and the imperceptible brushwork that creates vibrant and seductive atmospheres, still exert an irresistible fascination today.

Some large and important canvases are also devoted to mythology – whose tales were so fashionable in the iconography of the period – such as *Jupiter and Antiope*, *Amaryllis and Mirtillo*, *Vertumnus and Pomona* and *Thetis Receives the Arms and Armour for Achilles from Hephaestus* (*Venus at the Forge of Vulcan*).

The **Musei Reali in Turin** and **Arthemisia** are devoting to the artist an important exhibition centring on his vast output of portraits and more: the **45 paintings and 21 engravings** come from the most prestigious Italian and foreign museums and collections, such as the National Gallery of Art, Washington; Metropolitan Museum, New York; National Gallery, London, and British Royal Collection; Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh; Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; Alte Pinakotek, Munich; Kromeriz Castle, Prague; Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence; Musei Capitolini, Rome; Ca' d'Oro, Venice, and Galleria Nazionale di Palazzo Spinola, Palazzo Reale and Musei di Strada Nuova, Genoa. These works create a dialogue with the large nucleus of masterpieces in the Galleria Sabauda.

The exhibition was organized by the **Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities - Musei Reali of Turin** and **Gruppo Artemisia**, under the patronage of the **Piedmont Region** and **City of Turin**. It is curated by **Anna Maria Bava** and **Maria Grazia Bernardini**, in collaboration with a prestigious scientific committee composed of some of the most prominent Van Dyck scholars, namely Susan J. Barnes, Piero Boccardo and Christopher Brown.

The initiative is supported by **Generali Italia** through **Valore Cultura**, its programme that promotes art and culture throughout Italy and seeks to interest a vast and varied public – families, youth, clients and employees – in the world of art through reductions on tickets for exhibitions, theatrical performances, events and artistic and cultural activities, with the aim of creating shared value.

The exhibition's *special partner* is **Ricola**, with **Trenitalia** as *technical sponsor* and **Radio Dimensione Suono** as *radio partner*.

The event is recommended by **Sky Arte**.

The catalogue is published by **Arthemisia Books**.

THE EXHIBITION

The first section is devoted to the young Van Dyck's training and his relationship with Rubens.

After a short apprenticeship in Van Balen's very busy workshop, Van Dyck began a close collaboration with the great 17th-century master Peter Paul Rubens, who crucially influenced the development of his style. Van Dyck's remarkable skills enabled him to become a master of the Antwerp guild and to open his own studio at the age of eighteen, but he continued to collaborate with Rubens on important painting projects until he left for Italy. Although his very first works were still considerably indebted to Rubens' style, there emerged in them an original and innovative language characterized by a lyrical, poetic vein, which diverged from the master's epic style.

The second section examines Van Dyck's activity in Italy.

After a brief period at the court of James I in London, Van Dyck arrived in Italy in 1621 and stayed until 1627, visiting Venice, Turin, Rome, Bologna, Florence, Palermo and Genoa. In Genoa's "republican kingdoms" Van Dyck's new elegant style of portraiture, which was magnificent and majestic but, at the same time, full of vitality and charged with emotion, enjoyed great success, since it satisfied the nobility's desire for self-aggrandizement and ostentation. Moreover, it was precisely in Italy that the artist perfected his imperceptible brushwork and refined language by studying Italian art, and especially that of the Veneto and Titian, as evidenced by the studies in his famous *Sketchbook*, held by the British Museum and reproduced in the exhibition.

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The first portraits he made in Italy are real masterpieces, such as *Cardinal Bentivoglio* (Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi) and *Marchesa Elena Grimaldi Cattaneo* (Washington, National Gallery of Art), both on display here.

In the following years the artist executed a large number of portraits, in which he fine-tuned his rendering of the richly embroidered fabrics, the atmospheric setting and the psychology of the sitter.

The third section is devoted to the years at the court of Isabella Clara Eugenia in Antwerp.

When Van Dyck returned to Antwerp in 1627, he replaced Rubens as court painter to Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia. He also had occasion to work for the *stadtholder* Frederik Hendrik, Prince of Orange, who collected various paintings by the artist, including those of mythological subjects, such as *Amaryllis and Mirtillo* and *Thetis Receives the Arms and Armour for Achilles from Hephaestus (Venus at the Forge of Vulcan)*.

During this period Van Dyck portrayed many personages in Isabella's entourage, producing an exceptional gallery of paintings and engravings: the latter were gathered together in the volume *Iconographia*. Thirteen of the engravings from the Istituto Centrale della Grafica are on show, along with another eight from a private collection. The portraits of Archduchess Isabella dressed as a nun by Van Dyck and Rubens are both on display and can thus be compared.

The fourth section illustrates Van Dyck's activity at the court of Charles I.

In 1632 the artist moved to the court of Charles I in London, where he remained until his untimely death in 1641, apart from a few brief stays in Antwerp and Paris. It was at the English court that Van Dyck's fame reached its peak. He made an astonishing number of portraits of the king, the queen and their children (as in the two versions of *The Three Eldest Children of Charles I* on display) and many of the personages who regularly frequented the court of the King of England. Indeed, he offers us an impressive panorama of that high-ranking society: serene and powerful sovereigns, extremely elegant personages in sumptuous attire, and portraits of lords and ladies, dukes and princes, all of which gave little hint of the political strife that beset England under Charles I.

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