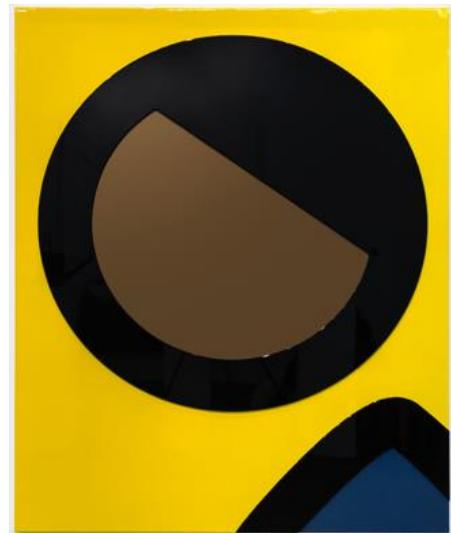


## News Release

Wednesday 2 August 2017

### **JULIAN OPIE UNVEILS NEW WORKS AS VAN DYCK'S SELF- PORTRAIT RETURNS TO NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY FOLLOWING THREE-YEAR UK TOUR**



**George.** by Julian Opie, 2014; Courtesy Julian Opie and Lisson Gallery, London; **Self-portrait** by Anthony van Dyck, c. 1640 © National Portrait Gallery, London [npg.org.uk/vandyck](http://npg.org.uk/vandyck); **Faime.** by Julian Opie, 2016; Courtesy Julian Opie and Lisson Gallery, London

Artist Julian Opie has made new work to display alongside the National Portrait Gallery's self-portrait of Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), acquired in 2014 after a major public fundraising appeal, as it returns to the Gallery following a three-year nationwide tour.

In *Julian Opie after Van Dyck* (6 October 2017 - 7 January 2018) one of Britain's foremost contemporary artists has been invited to present his work in dialogue with Van Dyck's self-portrait (c.1640) in the seventeenth-century galleries. The powerful new and recent works shown in this free display include *Faime.* (2016), *Lucia, back 3.* (2017) and *Beach Head, 6.* (2017).

While, at first glance, Opie's portraits are distinctly modern in their concise and abstracted forms, the style, composition and media are inspired by a variety of historic and contemporary visual sources. These range from ancient Egyptian and Roman art, and Dutch and British painted portraits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Japanese prints, and the symbolic language of modern signage.

The influence of seventeenth-century British portraiture on the works in this display is evident in the elegant pose of several of the sitters, and the turning postures that playfully reference Van Dyck's self-portrait. Viewing the old and new portraits side by side illuminates the influence and continuing relevance of Old Masters such as Van Dyck on British contemporary portrait practice.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'Following its hugely successful nationwide tour this is a wonderful opportunity for our visitors to see Van Dyck's Self-portrait back in the seventeenth century galleries of the National Portrait Gallery but also alongside striking works by Julian Opie.'

Catharine MacLeod, Curator of *Julian Opie after Van Dyck* and Senior Curator, Seventeenth-Century Portraits, National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'Julian Opie's work references historical portraiture, and has often used compositional devices employed by seventeenth-century artists. The portraits in this display are a testament to Van Dyck's lasting legacy in Britain.'

Julian Opie (b.1958) studied at Goldsmiths' College (1979-82) under Michael Craig-Martin, for whom he briefly worked as an assistant. He then emerged as an influential figure on the British art scene in the 1980s, with a series of painted metal sculptures. Opie's portraits are created by a process of refinement of line and form, the result of which is a distilled image that nevertheless retains key signifiers that are enough to 'read' the subject's likeness, such as the position of the head on shoulders, a facial feature or an accessory. His work has been exhibited extensively in galleries and museums worldwide.

*Julian Opie after Van Dyck* is the final display of three to be held at the Gallery as part of the three-year tour of the recently-acquired Van Dyck self-portrait. In 2016 the work was reunited with a loaned William Dobson self-portrait, which had been in the same private collection as the Van Dyck for 300 years. Part of *Painting the Artist: Van Dyck and Early Self-portraiture in Britain*, this display included a selection of self-portraits from the Gallery's permanent collection. In 2015, the Van Dyck self-portrait was accompanied by the loan of two portraits by the artist of Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria from the Prime Minister's official residence Chequers, for the display *Van Dyck: Transforming British Art*, which focused on the artist and his contemporaries.

This display marks the culmination of the Art Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund-supported *Van Dyck: A Masterpiece for Everyone* project, in which Van Dyck's self-portrait was displayed alongside historic and modern art at galleries around the nation. The tour started at Turner Contemporary, Margate (January - May 2015) before continuing to Manchester Art Gallery in May 2015, Dulwich Picture Gallery between January and April 2016 and, until September 2016, at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, and finally in 2017 at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh. All these venues have invited contributions from contemporary artists; these have included Mark Wallinger (Dulwich) and John Stezaker (Birmingham).

Each display on the tour was accompanied by a substantial learning and access programme, talks and events for a range of audiences including adults, school children and their teachers and young people, were held at all venues, and approaches to gallery and museum learning have been shared across the partnership.

Anthony van Dyck was born and trained in Antwerp, and went to work for the great painter Peter Paul Rubens while still in his teens. Quickly recognised as Rubens's most talented assistant, he soon set out to gain wider experience. Van Dyck briefly visited England in 1620-1, and then spent six years travelling and painting in Italy. Work in Antwerp and the Northern Netherlands followed this, and then in 1632, he returned to England.

Here, he was created Principal Painter to King Charles I, knighted and housed at the king's expense, and began producing paintings – almost all portraits. Portrait painting in England in the early seventeenth century was similar to Elizabethan portraiture. Fabrics and jewellery were minutely and beautifully depicted; while faces often had the appearance of expressionless masks. Van Dyck's paintings, by contrast, with their command of perspective and space, confident brushwork and sense of movement, set a new standard to which his contemporaries and successors aspired. Artists ranging from Gainsborough to Sargent turned to him for inspiration.

**DISPLAY: *Julian Opie after Van Dyck*** (6 October 2017 - 7 January 2018)  
National Portrait Gallery, London, Room 7, Admission free

Van Dyck's Self-portrait is currently on display in:

***Looking Good: The Male Gaze from Van Dyck to Lucian Freud***  
**Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh: 24 June – 1 October 2017**

## **VAN DYCK: A MASTERPIECE FOR EVERYONE TOUR :**

### **2015**

**Turner Contemporary, Margate: 24 January – 10 May 2015**

*Self: Image and Identity*

**Manchester Art Gallery: 21 May – 31 August 2015**

*Artists in the Frame: Self Portraits by Van Dyck and others*

**National Portrait Gallery: 4 September 2015 – 3 January 2016**

*Van Dyck: Transforming British Art*

### **2016**

**Dulwich Picture Gallery, London: 12 January – 24 April 2016**

*Making Discoveries: I am Van Dyck*

**Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery: 28 May – 4 September 2016**

*Turning to See: From Van Dyck to Lucian Freud*

**National Portrait Gallery: 16 September 2016 – 8 January 2017**

*Painting the Artist: Van Dyck and Early Self-portraiture in Britain*

### **2017**

**Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle: 28 January – 4 June 2017**

*Modern Visionaries: Van Dyck and the Artist's Eye*

**Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh: 24 June – 1 October 2017**

*Looking Good: The Male Gaze from Van Dyck to Lucian Freud*

**WEBSITE:** Information about the Van Dyck Self-portrait including specially commissioned films detailing a period of conservation of the painting can be found on the Gallery's website [www.npg.org.uk/vandyck](http://www.npg.org.uk/vandyck)

**PUBLICATION:** A booklet on the Van Dyck Self-portrait (£5 paperback) is available from the National Portrait Gallery Shops and online ([npg.org.uk/shop](http://npg.org.uk/shop)). There is also a full range of Van Dyck products available.

**Van Dyck Self-portrait 1640-1** Purchased with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund in honour of David Verey CBE (Chairman of the Art Fund 2004–2014), the Portrait Fund, The Monument Trust, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Aldama Foundation, the Deborah Loeb Brice Foundation, Sir Harry Djanogly CBE, Mr and Mrs Michael Farmer, Matthew Freud, Catherine Green, Dr Bendor Grosvenor, Alexander Kahane, the Catherine Lewis Foundation, the Material World Foundation, The Sir Denis Mahon Charitable Trust, Cynthia Lovelace Sears, two major supporters who wish to remain anonymous, and many contributions from the public following a joint appeal by the National Portrait Gallery and the Art Fund.

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### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

#### **The Van Dyck Self-portrait**

Van Dyck's last *Self-portrait* (c. 1640) was acquired by the National Portrait Gallery through a major fundraising appeal with the Art Fund, and with thanks to a major grant of £6,343,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), on 1 May 2014. It is one of three known self-portraits painted by Van Dyck when he was in England, and it probably dates from the last years of his life. The artist shows himself fashionably dressed but apparently in the act of painting, the line of his right shoulder and sleeve suggesting his hand raised in the process of applying paint to a canvas just out of sight. The broad handling of the paint in the costume, compared with the face, may indicate that this area of the painting is unfinished, or it may be that this is simply a more experimental work than his formal court portraits. The frame of this painting, crested with the sunflower motif associated with the artist, is of outstanding importance and is likely to have been designed with Van Dyck's involvement.

Born in Antwerp in 1599, Anthony van Dyck was an artistic prodigy who worked as an assistant to Peter Paul Rubens. He came to Britain in 1632 at the invitation of King Charles I, making London his home until his death in 1641. Charles I was Van Dyck's most famous patron, rewarding him with a knighthood and the title of Principal Painter. Van Dyck established himself at the heart of the English court, producing magnificent portraits of the royal family and many courtiers. However, beneath the shimmering surface of the court was a sense of growing

unease. The late 1630s were a time of political upheaval and by the end of 1642 civil war had broken out in Scotland and England. Within a year of producing this portrait Van Dyck was dead, buried in Old St Paul's Cathedral with the epitaph: 'Anthony Van Dyck – who, while he lived, gave to many immortal life'.

#### **About Art Fund**

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. It also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators. Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 123,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions and subscription to Art Quarterly magazine. In addition to grant-giving, Art Fund's support for museums includes Art Fund Museum of the Year (won by the Hepworth Wakefield in 2017) and a range of digital platforms.

Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at [artfund.org](http://artfund.org)

For further information please contact Madeline Adeane, Press Relations Manager, [madeane@artfund.org](mailto:madeane@artfund.org) / 0207 225 4804

#### **About the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)**

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife.

[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk) @heritagelottery. For further information please contact Katie Owen, HLF press office, on tel: (020) 7591 6036 out of hours mobile: 07973 613820.