The Courtauld Collection

PORTRAITURE TIMELINE

***Allegorical Portrait of Sir John Luttrell*, 1550. Hans Eworth**

Portraits become rich in symbols. They sometimes make references to classical mythology or they might include emblems that relate to the sitter's family identity. This allegorical portrait uses pictorial elements to represent complex ideas. The female figure holding an olive branch stands for peace.

***Portrait of Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle*, 1576. Scipione (il Gaetano) Pulzone**

Artists draw on a rich palette of colours deriving from minerals and organic matter, such as the cochineal beetles dried and crushed to make the vibrant red in this portrait. The likeness is painted on copper, but wood panel, and increasingly canvas, are more common in the 1500s.

***Portrait of a Lady*, 1536. Master A.W.**

Portraits made in the early 1500s emphasise the sitters' clothing and attributes. Oil paints are used to capture the rich silks and velvets of court outfits.

Flemish and German painters pioneer three-quarter and full-length portraits. Mannerism (1520–1600) sees the development of more varied poses and gestures in portraiture.

***Cameria, daughter of Suleiman the Magnificent, as Saint Catherine*, circa 1560. Workshop of Titian**

In Venice, Titian and his followers model forms without hard edges, focusing on sumptuous colours and textures. The city's position on the water partly explains the interest in atmospheric lighting effects.

***Family of Jan Brueghel the Elder*, 1613–15. Peter Paul Rubens**

Rubens initiates more inventive and life-like approaches to group portraiture. His portraits of families and couples often show a comfortable intimacy. Rubens' courtly manners and diplomatic skills gain him influential international patrons. The social status of the artist advances considerably.

1500

RENAISSANCE PORTRAITS 1400–1550 Portraiture emerges as an independent genre of painting. This era also sees the rise of the artist's self-portrait. The development of portraiture is supported by new Humanist philosophy that teaches that the proper study of mankind is man. Artists study classical sculpture and look directly at nature in order to depict three-dimensional form and produce realistic effects of light and shade.

1600

BAROQUE PORTRAITS 1600–1710 The Baroque style begins as a means to inject greater drama and emotion into religious works (countering the Protestant belief that art distracts from worship). Elements of theatre enter into portraiture, such as columns, arches and draped fabrics. Artists often employ chiaroscuro effects (strong contrasts of light and shadow). In turbulent religious times, the portrait emerges as one of the most secure ways for an artist to earn a living. Royals and nobles amass great art collections and the new merchant classes seek to record their achievements.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1501 Safavid dynasty and empire begins in Iran. Islamic culture flourishes.

1503–1506 Leonardo da Vinci paints the *Mona Lisa*.

1517 Martin Luther initiates the Protestant Reformation in Germany.

1519–1521 Hernán Cortés leads the conquest of Mexico.

1531 Church of England breaks away from Rome with Henry VIII as its head.

1533 Hans Holbein paints *The Ambassadors*.

1543 Copernicus explains how the planets revolve around the sun. Beginning of the Scientific Revolution.

1557 Portuguese settle in Macau in China, leading to a new era of trade between East and West.

1564 Michelangelo dies. His plans for St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, are completed in 1590.

1582 Pope Gregory XIII issues the Gregorian calendar, which is still used today.

1588 The Spanish Armada fails to invade England.

1618–1648 Thirty Years War. This begins as a conflict between Catholic and Protestant European states. Over 8 million people die.

***Portrait of a Man in an Armchair*, 1616–18. Anthony van Dyck**

Like his teacher Rubens, van Dyck travels in Italy and sees portraits by Titian. He moves from Antwerp to London in 1632 and changes the course of English portraiture. He is considered unrivalled in his ability to flatter and glorify patrons

***Portrait of a Woman*, circa 1645. Peter Lely**

Peter Lely moves to London from Holland in 1643 to work at the court of Charles I. He perseveres through the Civil Wars and the Interregnum to eventually work for Charles II. He is best known for painting beautiful women of the Restoration court in their luxurious and revealing silk dresses.

***Family Group*, 1756. Follower of Arthur Devis**

Informal group portraits in domestic or landscape settings become popular in the 18th century. Although called 'conversation pieces', the figures are typically in static poses, gazing out at the viewer. Such portraits are intended to show a family's elegant and fashionable tastes. Devis, William Hogarth and Johan Zoffany popularise this type of portrait in Britain.

***Old woman with a large head-dress*, circa 1630–40. Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn**

Building on the work of Rubens, Rembrandt brings new psychological depth to portraiture. His sketches and self-portraits show startling directness and honesty of observation. His *The Night Watch* (1642, Rijksmuseum) recasts the traditional group portrait as a moment of action and spectacle, and on a colossal scale.

***Philippe, Regent, Duke of Orléans, on horseback*, 1711–31. Charles Parrocel**

Royals across Europe continue to use portraiture as tool for political propaganda. Official images are often given as gifts between European courts or reproduced as prints for wider circulation. The Duke of Orléans is shown in this equestrian portrait as a confident and commanding leader.

***Georgiana, Lady Greville*, 1771–72. George Romney**

Britain's elite enter a new era of prosperity and see portraiture as an essential affirmation of their status and success. Romney is one of the most celebrated portrait painters of the 18th century. His rival Sir Joshua Reynolds teaches that the human figure is the highest subject for art, but the artist must idealise any imperfections.

1700

AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT 1680–1820 Thought in the 'long 18th century' is dominated by the idea that humans must use their capacity for reason in order to understand the world and achieve progress. Enlightenment philosophy questions the authority of absolute monarchy and the Catholic Church, advocating scientific law and natural order over ritual and superstition. The goals of rational humanity are the advancement of knowledge, liberty and religious tolerance.

ROCOCO PORTRAITS 1715–1760 The Rococo style evolves as a reaction to the formality and grandeur of the Baroque style. Following the death of Louis XIV in 1715, the Regent, Philippe Duke of Orléans, ushers in a new era of pleasure and relaxation (he governs France until Louis XV comes of age in 1723).

Portraits in Britain and France become lighter in mood and colour palette. Contemporary fashions, interiors and gardens often play important roles in portrait compositions.

1619 The Dutch import the first African slaves to Virginia.

1620 The Pilgrim Fathers travel to America.

1648 Dutch Republic is established after this area of the Netherlands wins independence from Spain.

1649 Charles I is executed following the English Civil Wars. Parliament rules (the Interregnum).
1660 Charles II is restored to the English throne.

1666 The Great Fire of London.

1682 Louis XIV moves the French court into the Palace of Versailles.

1683 The Ottoman Turks are defeated at Vienna, marking a steep decline in their empire.

1700 Dissolution of the Habsburg Empire in Spain.

1704 Isaac Newton's influential work *Opticks* on light and colour is published.

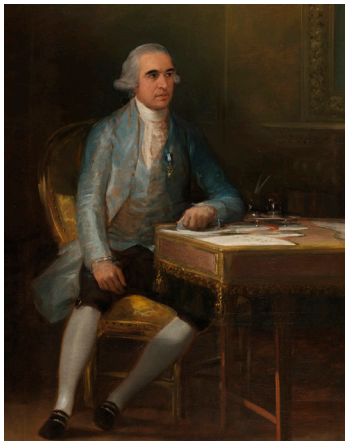
1707 Unification of the United Kingdom.

1712 First steam engine invented. The Industrial Revolution soon follows.

1756–1763 The Seven Years' War is fought among European powers.

1757 The Battle of Plassey signals the beginning of formal British rule in India.

1768 Founding of the Royal



***Portrait of Don Francisco de Saavedra*, 1798.**
Francisco de Goya y Lucientes

Portraits by the Spanish artist Goya show creative variations on the full-length 'status' portrait. In this image, a politician is perched at his desk, deep in thought but also prepared to rise and assume a more active role. The simple setting appears to show the influence of English portraiture.

***Portrait of a girl*, 1830–35.**
William Henry Hunt

Social changes: Between 1801 and 1901, Britain's population booms from 10.5 to 38.3 million people. By 1850 more than half of the population live in urban areas and Britain is at the heart of a vast global empire. Artists' personal drawings can help to build a broader and more diverse picture of society.

***Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*, 1889.**
Vincent van Gogh

Van Gogh's famous portraits and self-portraits are often described as Post-Impressionist (1885–1910). Although influenced by the Impressionists, his palette is much brighter and his brush stokes are more decorative. Energetic and colourful marks convey emotion.

***Portrait of the actor T.P. Cooke*, 1826.**
Horace Vernet

With the growth of the middle classes in the 19th century, more people have the financial means to commission a portrait. Small drawings and paintings offer more attainable options than life-size works. Celebrity likenesses are reproduced in printed form and sold at modest prices.

***La Loge*, 1874.**
Pierre-Auguste Renoir

As photographic portrait studios become widespread, commissions for painted portraits decline. Instead, Impressionist artists select sitters who interest them and sell the artworks speculatively through dealers. The personal identity and status of the sitter matter less than the broader experiences of humanity and modern life that they represent.

***Young Woman powdering Herself*, 1888–90.**
Georges Seurat

A more scientific approach to painting and colour is founded by Seurat in the mid-1880s. His technique, known as Pointillism, involves composing the image out of hundreds of tiny dots of pure colour. The artist relies on the eye and mind of the viewer to mix the colours optically.

1800

NEOCLASSICISM 1760–1820 Excavations of the Roman towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum spark a fashion for all things classical. Portrait artists might idealise a sitter's features or pose them in a way that resembles Greek or Roman sculpture.

ROMANTICISM 1780–1850 Artists and writers come to see the rationalism of the Enlightenment and Neoclassicism as restrictive. Romantic portraits tend to stress individual intellect and experience over shared customs and identity.

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS The 19th century sees the invention of multiple new colours, including cobalt blue, cadmium yellow and zinc white. Synthetic pigments are used to make brighter and more affordable pre-mixed oil paints.

- **1830s** The first commercially viable methods of photography are pioneered in France.
- **1841** American painter John Rand invents the collapsible paint tube, making the business of painting out-of-doors much more practical.

Academy of Arts in London.

1769–1771 Captain Cook's first voyage. He explores the coasts of Australia and New Zealand.

1775–1783 American war of Independence. The 13 colonies win freedom from Britain.

1787 Freed slaves from London establish Sierra Leone.

1789–1799 French Revolution.

1807 Britain abolishes the transatlantic slave trade.

1815 Britain and the Prussians defeat the French at the Battle of Waterloo.

1821 Michael Faraday builds the first electric motor.

1830 World's first public railway between Liverpool and Manchester.

1840 Introduction of the standard Penny Post.

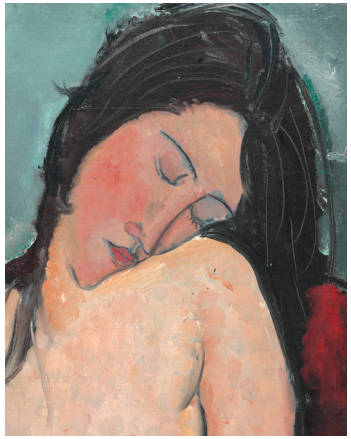
1859 Charles Darwin publishes *On the origin of species.*

1861–1865 Civil War in U.S.A.

1870–1871
French defeated in the Franco-Prussian War; the German Empire is created.

1874 First *Impressionist* exhibition, Paris.

1885 Alexander Graham Bell founds the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.



***Female Nude*, circa 1916.**
Amedeo Modigliani

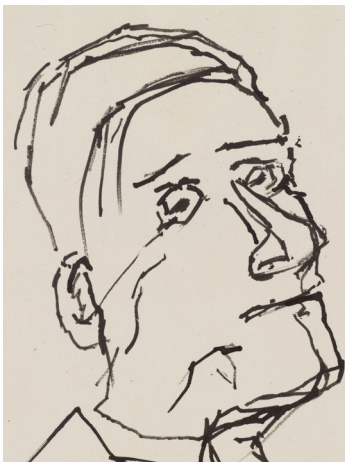
Modigliani modernises figurative painting, but his nudes are highly controversial when first exhibited in Paris in 1917. His depictions of women go against the European tradition of idealising the female body. The elongated faces of the women relate to Egyptian, African and Oceanic sculpture, which he studied at the ethnographic museum in Paris.

***Figure and vase of flowers, with palm tree in the background*, 1923.**
Henri Matisse

Matisse begins his career as a leader of the short-lived Fauvist movement (1905–1910). Fauvist portraits show a seemingly wild use of colour. Partly inspired by Japanese art, Matisse simplifies forms, flattens space and brings out patterns in both his printed and painted portraits.

***Young Woman in a White Blouse*, circa 1923.**
Chaïm Soutine

Portraits by Soutine show the influence of Van Gogh and Paul Cézanne in the way they focus on humble sitters and convey a strong sense of inner life through the application of the paint itself. Soutine exaggerates and stretches the features of the sitter that are of most interest to him.



***Self-portrait*, 1962.**
Oskar Kokoschka

Austrian artist Kokoschka is associated with a broad cultural movement called Expressionism, which develops in Germany just before and after WWI and spreads throughout Europe. Artists employ distorted forms and riotous colour in order to convey emotional and even spiritual states of being. As his peers embrace abstraction in the 1940s and 1950s, Kokoschka continues to make portraits, finding new ways to articulate the sitter's psyche and personality.

***Head and Shoulders*, 1982.**
Lucian Freud

Freud's portraits are often anonymous, but typically depict family members and friends. His models have to undergo intense scrutiny over long sittings. In the 1950s the tones and textures of flesh take on a new importance in his works. He records every line and wrinkle with unflinching honesty in thick impasto paint or using hatched lines in the case of his etched portraits, such as this image.

1900

IMPRESSIONIST PORTRAITS 1870s–1910 A group of artists in Paris start to hold their own shows in 1874, having found their work rejected time and time again by the Salon (the official exhibition of the French Academy). Impressionist paintings focus on the sensations of light and colour. Artists work from life and build up the painted surface with loose and rapid brush strokes. Portraits reflect wider interests in capturing modern life. Popular settings include cafes, theatres and parks around Paris.

NEW DIRECTIONS In the early decades of the 20th century, a new generation challenges modes of representation that go back to the Renaissance. Cubism rejects one-point perspective in favour of multiple viewpoints, while Surrealism takes art into the realms of dreams and the subconscious. As more abstract styles of art develop in the middle of the century, fewer portraits are produced. In the 1960s, American Pop Art sees a return of the genre, albeit in a highly commercial form. English portrait painters revive realistic approaches, but render the psychological presence of the sitter with a new, raw physicality.

1907 Birth of the modern plastics era comes with the invention of Bakelite.

1911 First non-stop commercial flight from London to Paris.

1914–1918 First World War.

1917 Russian Revolution, ending in the overthrow of the Tsarist regime and establishment of the first Communist state.

1926 John Logie Baird demonstrates the first TV.

1929 Wall Street Crash, followed by the Great Depression.

1939–1945 Second World War.

1945 Allied forces drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

1947–1991 Cold War; decades of tension between Capitalist and Communist world powers.
1960s New official policies to protect the environment.

1961 U.S.S.R. sends the first human into space.

1973 First handheld mobile phone.

1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall.

1990s–early 2000s Rise of public internet.

1998 First Apple iMac computer.