

Royal Academy of Arts  
Exhibition in Focus

RA



**Charles I**  
King and Collector

# An Introduction to the Exhibition for Teachers and Students

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For the Learning Department

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## Charles I: King and Collector

*Main Galleries*

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FRONT COVER **Cat. 3, Anthony Van Dyck, Charles I in Three Positions, 1635–36 (detail)**

BACK COVER **Cat. 28, Andrea Mantegna, The Triumph of Caesar: The Vase Bearers, c. 1485–1506 (detail)**

**RA** Royal  
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## Introduction

Charles I was King of England, Scotland and Ireland from 1625 to 1649. During this time, England was at war, both at home and overseas. The Protestant Reformation under Henry VIII (1491–1547) had splintered Catholic Europe, and in the first half of the seventeenth century the two Christian factions, the Catholics and Protestants, remained resolutely opposed. A tempestuous relationship between Charles and his government, paired with his desire for a single religious system across England and Scotland sent Great Britain into almost a decade of bloody Civil War. After one of the most turbulent reigns in British history, Charles I was eventually overcome by Parliament, imprisoned, tried and found guilty of high treason. On 30 January 1649, he was executed on a scaffold outside the Banqueting House at Whitehall Palace, London. This was the first, and last, time that England has seen a monarch overthrown by the people.

Charles had never been destined for the throne. Born into the Stuart family in Scotland on 19 November 1600, he was the second son and youngest surviving child of King James VI of Scotland and Queen Anne of Denmark. He was described as a shy child, who suffered a speech impediment and spent his formative years bound up in leg braces in an attempt to cure rickets. Ill health kept him at Dunfermline Palace in Fife until 1603, when he was deemed well enough to travel to England to join the rest of his family. That same year, Queen Elizabeth I of England died without an heir, and was succeeded by James VI of Scotland Charles's father, who became King James I of England, marking the union of the English and Scottish crowns. There had been little prospect for the young Prince Charles, who lived in the shadow of his charismatic older brother and heir to the throne, Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales. In 1612, the family and nation fell into despair when Prince Henry died suddenly at the age of 18, leaving Charles as the heir-apparent. The year after, Charles's sister, Elizabeth, left England for Europe to marry Frederick V, Prince Palatine of the Rhine. In the space of one year, at just thirteen years old, Charles had become an only child and the future King of England.

As in all royal households, support extended far beyond the reach of the immediate family. Charles was surrounded by a network of attendants who both facilitated his mounting responsibilities and formed strong personal bonds with the future King. In addition, an inner circle of sophisticated courtiers were to have a great impact on Charles. His father, James I, had already built some of these relationships. Notably, James shared a close bond with his 'favourite', George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham, who would later accompany Charles on a pivotal visit to Madrid in 1623. Another important figure was Thomas Howard, 14th Earl of Arundel, whose family had always had close ties with the Crown. In 1625, after the death of James I, Charles ascended the throne and married 15-year-old Henrietta Maria (1609–1669), daughter of King Henry IV of France and Marie de' Medici. It was around this time and in this context that Charles began to collect and commission works of art.

There had been a long tradition of portrait painting for the royal family. Hans Holbein the Younger had been court painter to Henry VIII, and James I employed Dutch painters Daniel Mytens and Paul van Somer to preserve his royal image. War had hindered travel to the continent and prevented exposure to the wider developments in art throughout the rest of Europe. Charles's brother, Henry, had however started to develop a small collection before his premature death, and the early decades of the seventeenth century certainly witnessed a growing appetite for collecting among England's nobility. Despite the stormy political climate, financial pressures and fragile relations with the rest of Europe, Charles stood at the epicentre of this cultural phenomenon. He collected mainly paintings, but also sculpture, prints and drawings, and decorative arts. His wealth of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Renaissance paintings was matched by first-class works from contemporary artists, notably those by his court painter, Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641). Henrietta Maria contributed significantly to the collection, actively commissioning works of art for her own palaces. Charles received advice and support from agents and advisors, and was driven by rivalry with other significant collectors at court. As a result, Charles I cultivated arguably the greatest art collection the country had ever seen.

The art inherited, collected and commissioned by Charles and Henrietta Maria was dispersed across their many palaces. The primary residences of the King were Whitehall (fig.1) and St James's Palace, while the Queen inherited Somerset House from Charles's mother, Anne of Denmark, and the unfinished Queen's House in Greenwich, eventually completed in 1636. The art was displayed both in private spaces and in devoted galleries at each palace and overseen by the Surveyor of the King's Works. The earliest record detailing the pictures in Charles's collection was drafted in 1623–24, when he was still Prince of Wales, listing just 21 paintings. Twenty-five years later, after his death in 1649, accounts and inventories reveal that he owned around 1,500 paintings.

Following the execution of Charles I, the King's possessions, including his works of art, were sold off in the Commonwealth Sale, held at Somerset House. Upon Restoration of the throne in 1660, Charles's son, Charles II re-acquired a large number of the works that had belonged to his mother and father, which now form part of the riches of the Royal Collection. The works he was not able to reclaim are still scattered in public and private collections. For the first time since the seventeenth century, this exhibition at the Royal Academy brings together some of the most important works owned by Charles I, and gives a sense of the quality and breadth of his extraordinary collection.

Fig. 1  
WENCESLAUS HOLLAR  
Whitehall Palace,  
1637–43  
Pen and grey ink and  
watercolour on paper,  
9.8 x 29.3 cm

The British Museum, London, inv.  
1859.0806.3901  
Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum



## Beginnings: Madrid

In an attempt to make peace with Catholic Spain, James I initiated lengthy negotiations with the Spanish court around the marriage of Prince Charles to the Infanta Maria Anna, daughter of King Philip III of Spain. The 'Spanish Match', as it became known, was unpopular with Protestants in England, whose memories of the recent Anglo-Spanish War (1585–1604) were still fresh. In the Spring of 1623, Charles visited Madrid, where the newly instated King of Spain, 18-year-old Philip IV, welcomed him with lavish celebrations. However, it became apparent from early on that the marriage would never happen. Although Charles returned to England with no bride, his visit to Spain introduced him to collecting practices in Europe and the scale and riches of the art collection at the Habsburg court.

George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, accompanied Charles on the trip. Just eight years older than the future King, Buckingham's renowned charm and beauty had won him a fast ascent from humble beginnings in Lancashire to Dukedom and unrivalled favour at court. Unlike his fellow courtier Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, Buckingham was impetuous and interested in the social advantages of collecting art, rather than its beauty or intellectual value. Only a few years earlier, he himself had started to build an impressive collection with the guidance of Balthasar Gerbier, his agent and advisor, who had successfully acquired many masterpieces for the Duke. Buckingham's collection hung in York House, his residence on The Strand in London. Charles and Buckingham had invited Gerbier and Endymion Porter, art advisor and groom of the royal bedchamber, to be part of the entourage travelling to Madrid.

The Spanish royal collection was among the most splendid in all of Europe. *El Escorial*, the King's residence just outside Madrid, housed approximately 1,000 paintings. Most notable was their unrivalled collection of paintings by the Venetian artist Titian (c.1488/90–1576). Titian had shared a close personal and professional relationship with Philip IV's great-grandfather, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and continued to paint for his successor, Philip II. Philip IV inherited spectacular portraits, religious paintings and mythological scenes by Titian. The collection made a great impression on the young Charles, and he began buying paintings by Titian, among others, on the open market in Madrid. Arguably the greatest acquisitions during his eight-month trip were two gifts from Philip IV: Titian's *Pardo Venus* and *Charles V with a Dog*.

**Cat. 16** In this full-length portrait, *Charles V with a Dog*, Titian positions the Holy Roman Emperor at the centre of an enclosed world. His cocked leg, distant gaze and casual interaction with the dog by his side soften the stiffness often found in formal state portraits. The elegant silver cape shows Charles V as refined, while Titian celebrates his military success by his doublet and breeches and the sword that hangs from his hilt. The Emperor's power is emphasised by his frontal stance while the large, muscular dog looks dotingly at his master, his stature



Cat. 16  
TITIAN  
**Charles V with a Dog,**  
1533  
Oil on canvas,  
194 x 112.7 cm

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, inv. P00409  
© Museo Nacional del Prado

... serving to reinforce Charles's masculinity. Furthermore, both the dog's muzzle and the Emperor's right index finger gesture towards his sex, which is strategically positioned to be at the centre of the composition. This picture is in fact a variant of a series of portraits painted for the Emperor by northern European artist Jakob Seisenegger. The portrait would have been a natural fit at Whitehall Palace, where it was eventually hung in the so-called Bear Gallery alongside other northern portraits of Charles's relations. Titian's *Charles V with a Dog* is an important precursor for the court artists who framed Charles I as a powerful ruler and established their international reputation by working at the royal court.

**Describe how Titian portrays Charles V as a strong leader.**

**Which, if any, of the same devices could be used to portray the power of a leader today? How would you portray power in a portrait of a modern leader?**

## Beginnings: Mantua

During his trip to Madrid and mindful of his future responsibilities as King, Charles had recognised the advantages of collecting. For a prince whose life had thus far lingered in the shadow of his peers and relatives, an art collection to rival his European counterparts was an attractive prospect. In 1623, Charles purchased seven cartoons by Raphael (1483–1520) of the *Acts of the Apostles*, made over 100 years earlier in Rome for Pope Leo X, who had commissioned them for reproduction as tapestries for the Sistine Chapel. A cartoon is a full-scale preparatory drawing for a tapestry or fresco. The word comes from the Italian *cartone*, which means a large sheet of paper or card. Having bought the cartoons with a similar intention, Charles sent the monumental works on paper to a tapestry factory that had been set up by his father at Mortlake, near London, where they were eventually woven, complete with seventeenth-century borders and the royal crest. Thus, it was no surprise that two years later, in 1625, Charles sent Nicholas Lanier, the royal master of music and an art enthusiast, to Italy to view the collection of the ruling family of Mantua, the Gonzaga, who during the course of the sixteenth century had amassed one of the most impressive collections of paintings and antiquities in Italy. Their astonishing collection included important works by some of Italy's best-known artists, including Leonardo, Titian, and Correggio. The artist Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) had been keeper of the collection from 1600–1608. Charles was aware that Duke Ferdinando Gonzaga was willing to sell some of his treasures to satisfy mounting debt. The timing of Lanier's visit was no coincidence, and over the following years a lengthy and complicated series of negotiations took place. These were conducted primarily by Daniel Nijs, a Dutch agent based in Venice, who eventually acquired the majority of the Gonzaga collection for Charles in a series of instalments.

**Cat. 28** At the invitation of Ludovico III Gonzaga, Marquess of Mantua, Andrea Mantegna (c.1430–1506) moved to the city to be court painter in 1460, and stayed until his death. Mantua was a centre for culture, attracting artists, scholars and humanists – an environment appropriate for Mantegna, who had a great interest in antiquity. In Mantua he produced the monumental series of nine canvases called the *Triumph of Caesar*. Since its completion in 1506, the *Triumph of Caesar* has been regarded as one of the greatest masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance. Mantegna chose not to depict one campaign in particular but instead celebrates the general success of the Roman leader Julius Caesar, who was well-documented in Roman literature and admired during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when art in the antique style was popular. The narrative moves from right to left across the nine canvases with Julius Caesar enthroned on his chariot in the final canvas.

Here, we see the fourth and best-preserved painting in the series, *The Vase Bearers*. The title relates to a text on the Triumphs in which the Roman author Plutarch describes ‘three thousand men, who carried silver coin in three hundred and fifty vases’. The blonde figure standing to the right, with fine, delicately-painted drapery, is particularly reminiscent of antique sculpture. He stands balanced on one leg while rotating his body in a *contrapposto* pose that was traditionally employed by ancient sculptors.

The *Triumph of Caesar* was purchased as part of the Gonzaga acquisition, and after arriving in London in 1630, the nine canvases were installed at Hampton Court Palace, where they remain today. The importance of these works and the value bestowed on them is highlighted by them being among the few paintings that were retained by the State after the execution of Charles I.

**How has Mantegna achieved a narrative that goes from right to left in this painting from the Triumphs series?**

**Considering the narrative depicted in the *Triumph of Caesar* series, why might Charles I have wanted it in his collection?**

## The Renaissance

In the 1630s, approximately one square mile of central London contained arguably the best selection of Renaissance paintings in the whole of Europe. Although Buckingham was acquiring high quality pictures in Italy and the Southern Netherlands, it was the Earl of Arundel, Thomas Howard, who contributed most significantly to this body of treasures, long before Charles had started to build his own collection. Among the circle of courtiers surrounding the King, Arundel was the first major collector of Renaissance art. In 1606, Arundel had married Alethea Talbot who came from a wealthy family with a longstanding interest in Italian culture. In 1613–14 they travelled through Italy accompanied by the English architect Inigo Jones. Arundel was the only high-ranking member of the Whitehall ‘circle’ who had been to Italy.



**‘The Triumphs of Julius Caesar by Mantegna were rare and unique things in this world whose value it was impossible to estimate.’**  
Daniel Nijs to Sir Dudley Carleton

**Cat. 28**  
**ANDREA MANTEGNA**  
**The Triumph of Caesar: The Vase Bearers,**  
c. 1485–1506  
Tempera on canvas,  
269.5 × 280 cm

RCIN 403961  
Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2018

Also an avid collector of northern European art, he travelled to Austria and Germany and visited Flanders in 1612, where he encountered the work of Peter Paul Rubens. Conversely, Charles never returned to the continent after his visit to Madrid in 1623, despite his favouring art from abroad. Much of Charles's appreciation of Renaissance art was based on the exquisite examples that surrounded him in London.

## THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Charles had a sustained interest in paintings from central Italy, beginning with his acquisition of the Raphael cartoons in 1623. The Gonzaga purchase included some astonishing works by Raphael, including his *Virgin and Child with St Anne and the Infant St John the Baptist* (fig. 2), which was valued at the Commonwealth Sale at £2,000, almost twice as much as the King's crown (£1,100). The picture went on to earn the title *La Perla* when it later entered the collection of Philip IV of Spain, who deemed it 'the pearl' of his entire collection. In 1627–28, Charles exchanged a volume of portrait drawings by Hans Holbein the Younger for Raphael's *St George and the Dragon* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), which had belonged to Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Although Charles's exact taste is difficult to decipher, almost all of the works in the so-called Privy Galleries in the King's private quarters at Whitehall Palace were adorned with Italian Renaissance paintings. The First Privy Lodging, which was the first of this suite of galleries, displayed almost exclusively works by Titian.

**Cat. 45** In the 1620s, Charles acquired the *Supper at Emmaus* as part of the Gonzaga purchase. By 1639, it hung in the First Privy Lodging Room at Whitehall Palace, surrounded by an impressive array of religious and secular paintings by Titian. It tells the story of the resurrected Christ revealing himself after his crucifixion to two of his disciples. As described in the New Testament (Luke, 24: 30–31): '... he took bread, and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight!' The broken bread and the playful cat and dog under the table contribute to a feeling of domesticity, while the dynamic pose



### 'The King prefers old paintings.'

Letter from England to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, 11 July 1635

**Fig. 2**  
**RAPHAEL**  
*Virgin and Child with St Anne and the Infant St John the Baptist ('La Perla')*, c. 1518  
 Oil on panel,  
 147.4 × 116 cm

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, inv. P00301  
 © Museo Nacional del Prado

**Cat. 45**  
**TITIAN**  
*The Supper at Emmaus*,  
 c. 1534  
 Oil on canvas,  
 169 × 244 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris, Department of Paintings,  
 inv. 746  
 Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) /  
 Stéphane Maréchal



of the man in green expresses surprise at the moment of revelation. Overall, Titian creates a scene infused with peace and contemplation. Christ's illuminated face and blessing hand at the centre of the composition, the smoky mountains and streams of ethereal light in the distant Venetian landscape all contribute to the painting's sense of calm and stillness. The composition recalls Leonardo's *Last Supper* (Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan), particularly the white cloth covering the table, and the recoiling figure in green to the left of Christ.

**Describe the different factors that motivated Charles to collect Italian Renaissance art.**

**How are these two paintings different to the ones Charles himself commissioned?**

## THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE

Although Charles exchanged the Holbein drawings for a work by Raphael, he did in fact own a handsome collection of paintings by the artist, as well as other impressive examples from northern Europe, including important works by Jan van Eyck, Hugo van der Goes, Albrecht Dürer and Jan Gossaert. Certainly, Charles was less interested in paintings from the Netherlands and Germany than was Arundel, who had a particular fondness, or 'foolish curiosity' as he called it, for Hans Holbein the Younger and owned an astonishing 44 works by the artist.



Cat. 36  
HANS HOLBEIN THE  
YOUNGER  
Johannes Froben,  
c. 1522–23  
Oil on panel, 48.8 × 32.4  
cm

RCIN 403035  
Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen  
Elizabeth II 2018

**'For that the eyes of the  
whole world, and of the  
spiritual world too, are  
turned upon her.'**  
Pope Urban VIII

Cat. 36 Holbein the Younger was born c.1497 in Augsburg, Germany, where he trained with his father. He came to England for the first time in 1526, returning in the 1530s when he started to receive annual payments from the royal household, where he worked for Henry VIII. He painted many portraits during this time, with perhaps his most important commission being a royal family portrait mural at Whitehall Palace, lost in a destructive fire in 1698.

This intimate portrait of Johannes Froben was painted before Holbein's first trip to England and depicts a friend and printer with whom Holbein had worked closely. The small-scale painting appropriately hung with other small pictures in the Cabinet Room at Whitehall Palace. The portrait may have once formed part of what was known as a 'friendship diptych', in which companions were shown alongside one another in two corresponding portraits. Froben would have formed the left half of the diptych, probably accompanied by a portrait of the humanist Desiderius Erasmus on the right. The detail of Froben's face exemplifies the meticulous technique employed by Holbein. Froben's sagging, stubbly jowls, wrinkled forehead and balding crown give a sense of his age. The relationship between sitter and artist is apparent, with Froben's soft gaze and half-smile exuding a warmth and ease. Here, Holbein attempts to capture the character of his close friend, focusing specifically on his face and leaving the background a plain, vibrant blue. The vivid realism of this picture must have had wide appeal in the seventeenth century, selling at the Commonwealth Sale for the high value of £100.

**How does Holbein portray Jans Froben differently to the way that Titian depicted the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V? How would you explain these differences?**

## Queen Henrietta Maria

The marriage contract between Henrietta Maria and Charles I was settled on 8 May 1625, promptly after the death of James I and Charles's accession to the throne. They married by proxy – a representative standing in for Charles, who was in England – in an opulent service at Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris. Until Henrietta Maria's arrival in England that year, Charles had only ever seen his future Queen briefly when he had stopped in Paris on his way to Madrid in 1623. Daughter of King Henry IV of France and Marie de' Medici, Henrietta Maria (named after both her parents) hailed from solid Catholic stock and was goddaughter to Pope Urban VIII. The papal court hoped the Queen would promote Catholicism in England. The English hoped she would become Protestant. Yet Henrietta Maria was not willing to compromise on religion and her taste in art made that clear.

The Queen was particularly drawn to Italian Baroque painting, a contemporary genre that was not of paramount interest to Charles. She commissioned the celebrated Bolognese painter Guido Reni to decorate the ceiling of her bedchamber in Greenwich. Cardinal Francesco Barberini, nephew to Pope Urban VIII, assisted

Cat. 85  
ORAZIO GENTILESCHI  
**Joseph and Potiphar's  
Wife**, c. 1630–32  
Oil on canvas,  
206 × 261.9 cm

RCIN 405477  
Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen  
Elizabeth II 2018



with the commission and chose *Bacchus and Ariadne* as the subject. Appropriately dramatic and sensual for a Baroque ceiling painting, the Cardinal was concerned that the composition might have been too explicit 'especially in these Parliamentary times', but apparently it was not and the painting was sent to the Queen in 1641. It is unclear as to whether it ever arrived in war-torn England, though it is recorded as being in the Queen's possession in France in 1648.

Many of the artists working in England were also Catholic. One such artist was Orazio Gentileschi (1563–1639), an Italian painter from Tuscany who had spent time in Rome and was inspired by the dramatic history painting and grand religious compositions of Caravaggio. Gentileschi had worked for Henrietta Maria's mother in Paris before being persuaded by the Duke of Buckingham to come and work for him in London. The artist, aged 63, arrived with his three sons in September 1626 and stayed until his death in 1639. His daughter and fellow-artist, Artemisia, joined them in England just one year before her father died. Gentileschi's output in England was not prolific; with portrait painting dominating the Protestant market, history painting and religious commissions were in low demand. This might help to explain why, following the assassination of the Duke of Buckingham in 1628, Gentileschi worked primarily for the Catholic Queen. During the 1630s, Henrietta Maria began enthusiastically commissioning works of art. At the Queen's House in Greenwich, Gentileschi (possibly in collaboration with Artemisia) painted an *Allegory of Peace and the Arts* for the ceiling of the Great Hall and several Old Testament pictures for the walls.

**Cat. 85** In this painting, Gentileschi depicts a scene from the Book of Genesis. The Bible passage (Genesis, 39: 7–12) relates how Joseph was bought by Potiphar, captain of the Pharaoh's guard. Potiphar's wife, attempting to seduce Joseph, has caught hold of his cloak. Later, she denounces Joseph as the seducer and uses his cloak as evidence. Gentileschi depicts Potiphar's wife, half-clad on dishevelled sheets, clutching Joseph's garment as he escapes into the peripheral darkness. The crimson curtain creates a striking backdrop. An explicit statement of majesty and splendour, crimson was the most expensive colour and one that was most associated with the Queen. The rich fabrics and smooth skin tones are reminiscent of Gentileschi's training in Florence, while the strong *chiaroscuro* (light and shade) and crisp finish reference the work of Caravaggio. The dramatic lighting, falling curtain and shallow depth of the room make for a theatrical composition. Although the painting was paid for by the King, it was likely to have been painted for the Queen, who appreciated high quality fabrics and theatrical performances, or 'masques', in which she herself often performed.

Here, both artist and patron came from traditions where magnificence was conveyed through visual splendour. In *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, Gentileschi succeeds in producing a skilled history painting whilst shrewdly satisfying the tastes of the Queen. The work was sold for £50 at the Commonwealth Sale but was recovered at the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 and returned to

the Queen at her château in Colombes, just outside Paris, where it is recorded as hanging with other paintings by Gentileschi.

**What do the subject and the style of this painting reveal about the tastes of the Queen Henrietta Maria?**

**How does this painting by Gentileschi differ from earlier paintings by Raphael and Titian, collected by Charles I?**

## Anthony van Dyck

Portraits had always been the prevailing genre of painting at the English court. James I had employed Dutch artist Daniel Mytens, who continued to paint for Charles I after his father's death. Mytens was much appreciated at court; his paintings had a sharpness that was admired, and his powerful self-portrait hung in a prominent position at Whitehall Palace. However, the arrival of Anthony van Dyck in 1632 significantly raised the standard of portrait painting and changed Mytens's fortune in England.

Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) was born in Antwerp into a mercantile family that traded in silk. His talents were recognised at the age of ten and after an apprenticeship, he joined the renowned Antwerp studio of Peter Paul Rubens in 1615. Described by Rubens as 'my best pupil' in a letter to the English diplomat and art collector Sir Dudley Carleton, 1st Viscount Dorchester, Van Dyck spent these early years assisting Rubens as well as painting portraits and religious commissions of his own. He came to London for just five months in 1620, where he was immediately initiated into circles close to the King. During this trip he met a number of esteemed collectors, including Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, whose portrait he painted, and with whom he could appreciate the exquisite examples of Italian and northern European art in England. After travelling extensively in Italy and spending time working for the Archduchess Isabella, the Habsburg Governor of Flanders, Van Dyck returned to England in 1632. In that very year, he was knighted at St James's Palace, appointed principalle Paynter in Ordinarie to their Majesties, and given a property on the river in Blackfriars, London. Aside from a year spent back in Antwerp from 1634–35, Van Dyck remained in England until his death.

**Cat. 76** This arresting portrait of the King is listed in a memorandum Van Dyck wrote in 1638, but it is not known for whom the work was painted nor where it was intended to be hung. Van Dyck shows Charles 'in the hunting field', dismounted from his steed, which is steadied by an attendant as it paws the ground. It appears to depict the moment immediately after the chase, as suggested by the horse's tired, downward posture and its foaming mouth. The restlessness of the horse contrasts with the King who, isolated, commands the other half of the canvas. His nonchalant posture, with one hand casually resting on his staff and the other arm



Cat. 76  
**ANTHONY VAN DYCK**  
**Charles I in the Hunting Field**, c. 1636  
 Oil on canvas,  
 266 × 207 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris, Department of Paintings, inv. 1236  
 Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Christian Jean

on his hip, conveys a sense of calm confidence. Elevated on a raised plateau of grass, Charles stands tall, emulating the horse's stance with his left foot forward. Charles's hat, perfectly poised on his neatly coiffured head of hair, is juxtaposed with the dishevelled mane of his horse. His silver hunting jacket and the pale blue glimmer of the garter sash around his neck and left leg place him hospitably among the silvery grey English skies. The sumptuous fabric and distant orange glow on the horizon show Van Dyck's appreciation of Titian. In fact, the pose of the horse directly references a drawing after Titian in Van Dyck's *Italian Sketchbook*.

Van Dyck painted three equestrian portraits of the King (fig. 3). The other two continue an established tradition of depicting rulers on horseback, a composition used to display control and power. This composition had been explored in paintings

of rulers by both Titian and Rubens, and also in sculpture by Hubert Le Sueur, whose bronze sculpture of Charles on horseback now stands in Trafalgar Square. Van Dyck's depiction of the King in *Charles I in the Hunting Field* is far more informal and intimate. Charles is on foot rather than mounted in splendour and he is at the hunt, one of his favourite pastimes. The painting is soft, both in nature and in technique. Paul van Somer had painted Charles's mother, Anne of Denmark, in a similar composition only a matter of years earlier and Henry, Charles's older brother was also painted at the hunt by Robert Peake.



Fig. 3  
**ANTHONY VAN DYCK**  
**Charles I on Horseback**, c. 1637–38  
 Oil on canvas,  
 367 × 292.1 cm

The National Gallery, London. Bought 1885, inv. NG1172  
 Photo © The National Gallery, London

of the three portraits, with even the elaborate lace collars or 'cloak bands' subtly varying in design. Suspended from a blue silk sash around his neck, Charles wears a small medal of St George on horseback. This represents the Order of the Garter, the most prestigious chivalric order in England and one that was highly revered by the King. His fondness for the Order of the Garter is emphasised by Van Dyck in the way Charles clutches the ribbon in the left-hand portrait, and in revealing part of the Order's 'star' on the right.

The painting shows Van Dyck's knowledge of the elaborate costumes and billowing fabrics in Bernini's sculptures, which he must have encountered during his own extensive travels in Italy from 1621–1627. That said, the painting is a far cry from inanimate marble. Charles comes alive through the effective application of rouge pigments to his complexion and the white heightening in his eyes. Van Dyck's close attention to the sumptuous fabrics and lace detail also suggest that this work is not simply a study for a sculpture, but a means of displaying his talent to clients both at home and overseas. The bust arrived in England from Rome in July 1637, and was sent to Oatlands Palace, Surrey. It was much admired, in particular by Queen Henrietta Maria, who wrote to Bernini two years later expressing her enthusiasm and asking that he also make one of her. Unfortunately, Bernini never completed the bust of Henrietta Maria (although portraits of her by Van Dyck have survived) and his bust of Charles was lost in the fire of 1698.

**What do *Charles I in the Hunting Field*, *Charles I on Horseback* and *Charles I in Three Positions* reveal about different sides to the king?**

**If you were to select one of these three portraits to be used as propaganda, which would you select and why?**

Cat. 3  
**ANTHONY VAN DYCK**  
**Charles I in Three**  
**Positions, 1635–36**  
 Oil on canvas,  
 84.4 × 99.4 cm

RCIN 404420  
 Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen  
 Elizabeth II 2018



## The Whitehall Cabinet

By 1639, Abraham van der Doort, Surveyor of the King's works of art, had compiled an inventory of the entire contents of the art collection that Charles had at Whitehall Palace. The document provides a meticulous record of every item including its dimensions, identification of the artist, and in some instances details of a work's provenance. In addition, Van der Doort locates works of art in their respective galleries within Whitehall. At the heart of the inventory is the Cabinet, which holds by far the largest number of objects, and of which Van der Doort was Keeper before becoming Surveyor of the entire collection in 1625.

The Cabinet contained some of Charles's most impressive paintings: Raphael's *St George and the Dragon*, which he had acquired from the Earl of Pembroke in exchange for a volume of Holbein drawings, alongside works by Leonardo and Mantegna. It was an intimate space, in which Van der Doort records 73 paintings, 36 statues, 77 miniatures and limnings (miniature paintings on vellum, parchment made from calfskin), 54 books, 17 drawings, 4 framed engravings and other decorative objects including coins, medals, gold, silver and gem stones. The paintings were hung densely, while many of the smaller objects were kept in chests and cases. The few drawings that Charles owned would have been bound into volumes rather than being on display. Installed into the ceiling was a preparatory oil sketch by Rubens for the ceiling canvases he produced for Banqueting House. The miniatures were a significant part of the Cabinet room. They included meticulously painted royal portraits, as well as copies of narrative paintings that were hung elsewhere in Charles's collection, notably works by Titian, Raphael and Correggio. These limning copies were primarily painted by Peter Oliver, the chief miniaturist at court.

**Cat. 133** Nicholas Briot was a French coin and medal engraver who became chief engraver for the Royal Mint in 1633, the year of Charles's Scottish coronation. Following the Union of the Scottish and English Crowns upon James I's accession in 1603, monarchs were required to have a coronation in both England and Scotland. This medal was struck in commemoration of Charles's return to London after his coronation in Edinburgh. In the style of ancient rulers, the obverse of the medal shows the King on horseback, presented as 'Emperor', while the reverse depicts a beautifully detailed view of the city of London from the south, looking towards Old St Paul's Cathedral. An elaborate sun and swirling clouds are suspended above the city, and below them a flock of birds swoops across the sky. London Bridge, the only bridge in London at the time, stretches over the Thames, while vessels ferry passengers along the river. Commissioning a medal to mark important events was a new phenomenon, though it had been common practice in ancient traditions. Unfortunately, the King's collection of coins and medals was lost following his execution, and a large number of pieces described in the inventory are difficult to identify. However, Van der Doort recorded the design of this particular



medal in great detail, describing it as 'much worne in the Kings pockett', hinting at the sentimental value it must have held for Charles.

**Why do you think Charles filled his cabinet with miniatures of other paintings in his collection?**

**Why do you think this coin was so important to Charles?**

## Peter Paul Rubens

The first and only visit Peter Paul Rubens made to England lasted just over nine months. He arrived in London on 5 June 1629 on a diplomatic mission for Philip IV, King of Spain, to negotiate peace between Spain and England, who had been at war for many years. No time was wasted and on the day Rubens arrived in London he took a royal barge downstream from Westminster to Greenwich, where he met with the King.

Although Rubens's visit was primarily political, he inevitably found himself in England in an artistic capacity. He stayed with Balthasar Gerbier at York House, the former home of the Duke of Buckingham, whom Rubens had met and painted in Paris in 1625. He would have seen that portrait hanging at York House, along with other works from the Duke's impressive collection. Like Van Dyck, Rubens was astonished by the quality of the 'old' paintings in London. 'This island' he wrote 'seems to me to be a spectacle worthy of the interest of every gentleman [...] not only for the splendour of the outward cultures [...] but also for the incredible

Cat. 133  
NICOLAS BRIOT  
**Medal Commemorating the Return of Charles I to London after His Coronation in Scotland, 1633 (obverse and reverse)**  
Gold, struck, diameter 4.3 cm

RCIN 443109  
Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2018

quantity of excellent pictures and ancient inscriptions which are to be found in this Court!

**Cat. 83** *Landscape with St George and the Dragon* was one of the few paintings produced by Rubens during his time in England. The legend tells of a town terrorised by a wild dragon, until it is defeated by St George in order to save the endangered Princess. Rubens chose to depict the moment after George has overcome the dragon and is handing the girdle back to the Princess for her to lead the beast back to the city. The serene moment lit by celestial rays at the centre of the composition contrasts strongly to the fearful scenes surrounding it. The picture feels religious in its ethereal nature and its allusion to the triumph of life over death. Rubens appropriately positions the patron saint of England on the banks of the river Thames.

Nostalgic in sentiment (in 1630 it was described as being painted 'in honour of England and our nation') the painting was planned and perhaps only partly executed in England before Rubens shipped it back to Flanders 'to remain there as a monument of his abode and employment here'. It was not until 1634–35 that Endymion Porter, ambassador to the Spanish Netherlands, bought the painting and had it returned to England. Although it may not have been intended for the King, the features of the saint do show a strong resemblance to Charles I.

Though Rubens returned to Antwerp with this great masterpiece, he left Charles I with his greatest legacy in England: nine canvases to decorate the ceiling of the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall Palace. Rubens was approached for this commission as early as 1621, when the Banqueting House was almost complete. As commissioned by Charles, Rubens's sequence of ceiling paintings celebrates the life and successful reign of his father, the late King James I. When Rubens started on this monumental project, probably in the summer of 1628, James had already been dead for three years. In 1635, years after his visit to London, Rubens shipped the finished canvases from Flanders. Perhaps more poignantly, 13 years after they were installed into the architecture of Inigo Jones's magnificent building, Charles was tried, found guilty of high treason and executed on a scaffold outside the Banqueting House. Rubens's canvases were the last paintings that Charles I saw.

***Landscape with St George and the Dragon* was described as 'painted in honour of England and our nation'. What does this say about the view of England at the time it was painted by Rubens?**

**What might an artist of today paint 'in honour of England'?**

Cat. 83 *overleaf*  
PETER PAUL RUBENS  
**Landscape with St George and the Dragon, 1630–35**  
Oil on canvas, 152.5 × 226.9 cm

RCIN 405356  
Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2018



## Conclusion

After the death of Charles I, the Commonwealth Sale took place at Somerset House. Although the majority of the items were sold, both at home and overseas, some were kept in 'reserve' and retained by the State, and some went with the Queen into exile. The dispersal of Charles's collection has made it difficult to establish its entire contents, and although the inventories are indispensable to identifying a large number of the works, reimagining the collection as a whole is impossible. In spite of this, Charles's role as 'King and Collector' has left an invaluable legacy in attitudes towards art and collecting in England, and inspired many of the great private and public collections in Great Britain.

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**'I go from a corruptible  
to an incorruptible  
Crown, where no  
disturbance can be!'**

Charles I, 30 January 1649

Cat. 45 (detail)

TITIAN

**The Supper at Emmaus,**  
c. 1534



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