

Крюкова Е.В., студ. гр. 202а, ФК и СКД  
БГУ культуры и искусств  
Научный руководитель - Платонова Э.Е.,  
ст. преподаватель

## FAMOUS PAINTERS OF GREAT BRITAIN

Painting in England in the 17th-19th centuries is represented by a number of great artists, and during that period it was greatly influenced by foreign painters.

The Flemish painter Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641) was really the father of the English portrait school. The English king personally invited Van Dyck to London, and during his first year in England the painter spent most of his time painting the king and the queen. Van Dyck created the impressive, formal type of portrait, and such masters as Reynolds, Gainsborough, Lawrence and Raeburn owe much to their study of his canvases. One of the most popular of Van Dyck's works is the "Family Portrait".

During the 18th century a national school of painting was founded in England. William Hogarth (1697-1764) was the first great English artist who raised British art to a high level of importance. Hogarth painted many pictures. Success had come to him due to hard labour. He wrote, "I know of no such thing as genius. It is nothing but labour and diligence". "Hogarth is also well known as a satirist on canvas and a humorist. He loved to call himself "author" rather than "artist". We recognize his literary talent and can place him with such great masters of literature as Moliere, Fielding, and Thackeray. His work ranged from realistic portraiture to comic strip-like series of pictures called "modern moral subjects". Much of his work poked fun at contemporary politics and customs; illustrations in such style are often referred to as "Hogarthian". In 1743-1745 Hogarth painted the six pictures of Marriage a-la-mode ([National Gallery, London](#)), a pointed skewering of upper class 18th century society. This moralistic warning shows the miserable tragedy of an ill-considered marriage for

money. This is regarded by many as his finest project, certainly the best piece of his serially-planned story cycles.

Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) was the most outstanding portraitist of the second half of the 18th century. He was born in Devonshire in 1723. He received a good education from his father, a clergyman and master of the free grammar school. At seventeen Reynolds went to London to study painting, where he soon became a fashionable portrait-painter. In 1768 Reynolds became the first president of the Royal Academy founded at that time. Reynolds completed a whole gallery of portraits of his famous contemporaries. He painted his models in heroic style showing them as the best people of the nation. His portraits are not free of certain idealization of characters. Reynolds' devotion to portraiture made him one of the founders of the English school of portrait painting at that time. Some of his mythological works include real personages.

George Romney (1734-1802) painted portraits following Reynolds' style to some degree. Romney's portrait of Mrs. Greer shows a very attractive woman whose beauty is emphasized by the contrast between her pale face and dark deep eyes, strong colouring of her dress, done in black, grey and light tones. Romney never created a psychological image of his models. He expressed a general impression making it elegant and vivid. By 1757, Romney was becoming well-known as a portraitist. The Death of [General Wolfe](#) won a prize from the [Royal Society of Arts](#). Romney soon had a thriving portrait business in Long Acre. Much of his work features local aristocrats, ranging from wealthy gentlemen and military officers to ladies, children, and entire families. Most of his paintings feature a dark background that contrasts well with the subject of the painting and helps to center the viewer's attention on them. Despite his great success Romney was never invited to join the [Royal Academy](#) nor did he ever apply to join. While there has been much speculation about his relationship with the Academy, there is no doubt that he normally remained aloof maintaining that a good artist should succeed without being a member. His own career

supported this belief, and it was only towards the end of his life that he expressed the slightest regret for his views.

John Hoppner (1758-1810) portrayed the English aristocracy at the end of the 18th century. Most of his works show elegant ladies and nice children. He first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1780. His earliest love was for landscape, but necessity obliged him to turn to the more lucrative business of portrait painting. At once successful, he had throughout life the most fashionable and wealthy sitters, and was the greatest rival of the growing attraction of [Thomas Lawrence](#). Ideal subjects were very rarely tempted by Hoppner, though a "Sleeping Venus," "Belisarius," "Jupiter and Io," a "Bacchante" and "Cupid and Psyche" are mentioned among his works. The [prince of Wales](#) visited him especially often, and many of his finest portraits are in the state apartments at [St. James's Palace](#), the best perhaps being those of the prince, the [duke](#) and [duchess of York](#), of Lord Rodney and of [Lord Nelson](#). Among his other sitters were Sir [Walter Scott](#), the [Duke of Wellington](#), Frere and [Sir George Beaumont](#). Unusually Hoppner painted the background and perhaps more of a full length portrait of [Charlotte, Countess Talbot](#) by [Thomas Gainsborough](#) in 1788, the year in which Gainsborough died. It is now in the [Dunedin Public Art Gallery](#).

John Opie (1761-1807) painted not only portraits but also historical scenes. The artist mostly self-taught but very talented. Opie's work is generally regarded as verging on crude, but original and individualistic. Opie is also known as a writer on art by his *Life of Reynolds* in Wolcot's edition of Pilkington, his *Letter on the Cultivation of the Fine Arts in England*, in which he advocated the formation of a national gallery, and his *Lectures as professor of painting to the Royal Academy*, which were published in 1809, with a memoir of the artist by [Amelia Opie](#), his widow.

Henry Raeburn (1756-1823) was a Scottish painter. He created a great number of portraits that are done with much feeling. He uses shadow and light contrasts making his technique monochromatic. Raeburn's manner bears a certain resemblance

to that of Reynolds'. But at the same time there are important differences between two. In his portrait of Mrs. Bethumer the painter shows not only the woman's wonderful beauty but also her inner character. The transmission from lilac to rust colours serves to emphasize the lyrical qualities of the model.

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) can be called one of the greatest masters of the English school. He painted portraits and landscapes. His manner differs greatly from that of Reynolds' circle. Gainsborough had little academic training. The influence of old masters is not so easily seen in his works. The famous "Blue Boy" is one of his best-known canvases. But there is no definite information about the date of its painting. The work was little known in Gainsborough's days. Gainsborough greatly influenced the English school of landscape painting. He was one of the first English artists to paint his native land. His best landscape are "Cornard Wood", "The Market Cart", "The Bridge", "Sunset" and others. Gainsborough's great love for his country-side, and his ability to paint it made him an innovator in this field. His works contain much poetry and music. Gainsborough is sometimes considered to be a forerunner of impressionists, although he did not know their theories and techniques.

John Constable (1776-1837) was an English landscape-painter. His most famous works are "The Lock", "A Cottage in a Cornfield", "The Haywain" and others. He often repeated themes depicted by Gainsborough. Nevertheless, Constable seems really to belong to another century. He was the first painter who worked in the open air making his sketches direct from nature. This manner of painting is characteristic of modern artists. Constable's technique is close to that of the impressionists.

Joseph Turner (1775-1851) was born in London. His father kept a barber's shop. Turner chose to be an artist when he was thirteen. Until 1792 Turner painted only water-colours. His first oil painting was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1793. In 1802 Turner was elected Academician of Royal Academy and he enjoyed the dignity of Academician for nearly half a century. More than anything else in nature

Turner loved the sea, to which he devoted many of his canvases (“The Shipwreck”, “Fishing Boats in a Squall” and others). The sea in itself excited him, but especially he loved to paint the sea as it affected ships.

There are some eternal notions in the world. Among such notions is Art. From time in memorial people follow various tendencies and appreciate work of various artists. So many people, so many tastes.

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