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Critical Journal #1 (Portraiture)

The National Gallery introduced me to the genre of portraitures and landscapes. Back then, the demand for portraitures were at its peak, regardless of how horrid the people’s poses in the portraits were. Throughout the gallery, there were many portraits with similar features, and some distinctive ones.

In the National Gallery, it was very enthralling to learn about landscape paintings and that there was a lack of demand for them. Beginning in the pre-Renaissance period, people appreciated the portraitures and artists like Thomas Gainsborough had a profound interest in creating landscape paintings. However, he acknowledged that he wouldn’t have been lucrative by just drawing landscape paintings, so he instead drew portraits with the ideal landscape he visualized about in the background. It was interesting because in his portraits, the focal point wasn’t on the family or individual, but rather on the landscape. This is exemplified by his painting, *Mr and Mrs Andrews.* In the painting, the estate of Mr. Andrews is greatly emphasized. When one first looks at the piece by Gainsborough, the individual most likely will grasp the idea that Mr. Andrews was an affluent, and modestly powerful man. Gainsborough does an excellent job evoking Mr. Andrew’s ego through his arrogant, narcissistic-looking face. Mr. and Mrs. Andrews’ clothes also indicate that they are of a higher social class than normal people. The portrait of the couple and dog are positioned on the left side of the painting, allowing him to demonstrate his talent and adoration for landscapes, which portrayed the gloom of the background well with the clouds.

Anthony van Dyck was a very influential artist in the 17th century. One of his most prominent works includes *Equestrian Portrait of Charles I.* In this painting, Charles I is illustrated sitting on top of a magnificent and gigantic horse. The first thing one many notice about the painting is the size of the horse’s body in comparison to its head and Charles I. Anthony van Dyck was known for creating portraitures of powerful individuals such as Charles I, and portraying them as more elegant and appealing than they are in person. In the painting, the size of the horse’s head is much smaller in comparison to the horse’s body in order to appeal to Charles I’s body since Charles I was known for having a small stature. His height may go noticed if one concentrates on the amount of space between his feet and the ground as he is on the horse. A noteworthy aspect of the portrait would be the color of the saddle, representing royalty.

Back in the pre-Renaissance period, children were portrayed in artworks as adult-like and serious. It wasn’t until the 18th or 19th century that individuals showed to be more charismatic and cheery. Anthony van Dyck also had experience with drawing children. In his painting, *The Balbi Children*, three children are painted in royal clothes outside of what appears to be a coliseum or house. Unlike children in the 21st century, these children have adult-like gestures, as if they are contemplating life. One thing to note about the surroundings would be the scarecrow. Historically, black crows were part of the de Franchi family image. The fact that the black crows were drawn on the canvas of the picture suggests that the three children may have been part of the de Franchi family. This was a great use of symbolism and children in portraits were also reflective of the time period they lived in. This painting hints that children back then were not very happy, and grew up with a side of seriousness. Overall, Dyck was very emblematic of the portraiture era with his diverse collection of paintings of adults, children, and animals.