

MR AND MRS ANDREWS ABOUT 1750

GAINSBOROUGH, THOMAS 1727–1788

This portrait is a masterpiece from Gainsborough's early years, painted soon after the marriage of Robert Andrews and his wife Frances Mary.

The small full-length portrait in an open-air setting is typical of Gainsborough's early works. The sitters' costumes were most likely painted from artists' mannequins, with the landscape studied separately. Mr Andrews' satisfaction with his well-kept farmlands pales in comparison to the passion with which Gainsborough paints the gold and green fields beyond, allowing him to display his skills as a painter of changing weather and glorious scenery.

See Gainsborough and many other artists' love for the English landscape every day, for free, at the National Gallery.



The Grand Tour™ is a collection of priceless paintings set free around the streets of London by the National Gallery and Hewlett-Packard

THREE MEN AND A BOY ABOUT 1647–8

THE LE NAIN BROTHERS

Sometimes it's hard to tell brothers apart. That's certainly the case with Antoine, Louis and Mathieu Le Nain, who moved to Paris to become celebrated artists in the 1620s. Whether they worked individually or collaborated, they always signed their paintings simply 'Le Nain'.

Three Men and a Boy is sometimes thought to be a triple self-portrait of the elusive siblings, though which is which remains open to question. Cleaning in 1968 revealed that the picture was a work in progress – the young boy's head emerged under many layers of paint.

You can see other works by the Le Nains every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

A GROTESQUE OLD WOMAN

ABOUT 1525–30

ATTRIBUTED TO QUINTEN MASSYS
1465–1530

Massys was a cultural magpie. A leading painter in Antwerp by 1510, he drew inspiration from local Flemish artists, amongst others.

Perhaps Massys got the idea for A Grotesque Old Woman from the many crude faces Leonardo drew in his notebooks. The painting is thought to be a satire on vain old women who dress far too young for their age. Someone was inspired by her looks though. John Tenniel, illustrator of Alice in Wonderland, based his Ugly Duchess on the old dear.

She sits among more celebrated beauties at the National Gallery, all of which you can see every day, for free.

THE VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS

ABOUT 1491–1508

DA VINCI, LEONARDO 1452–1519

The Virgin of the Rocks is a typically brilliant yet mysterious Leonardo painting that has kept art historians guessing for centuries.

The scene shows the Virgin Mary, the Christ Child, John the Baptist as a baby, and an angel in a cavernous, watery landscape. Commissioned as an altarpiece, it is one of two versions. The other hangs in the Louvre and was recently featured in *The Da Vinci Code*, prompting a huge surge in popularity for both extraordinary paintings.

The Virgin of the Rocks is the only painting by Leonardo in a UK public collection. You can see it every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

BATHERS AT ASNIERES 1884

SEURAT, GEORGES 1859–1891

When Seurat presented his mammoth canvas to the influential Paris Salon of 1884, it was thrown out for being too radical. Why? Because it shows working-class men on a majestic scale usually reserved for gods and noblemen.

Bathers is set on the River Seine in north west Paris. Seurat had yet to perfect his pointillist technique, made up of lots of small dots, like a television picture. But he added some later, notably to the boy's hat.

Fortunately, the National Gallery is more democratically minded than the Salon. All our pictures belong to the public and entrance to see them is free.

SAMSON AND DELILAH ABOUT 1609–10

RUBENS, PETER PAUL 1577–1640

Like a still from a film, Rubens' painting of Delilah's betrayal of Samson freeze-frames all the drama of a moment in time.

It's a retelling of the powerful story from the Old Testament, where the mighty Jewish hero falls for the wanton charms of a prostitute, and rashly reveals that the secret of his strength lies in his flowing, uncut locks. Having exhausted him in a night of passion, she calls in the barber, and hands him over emasculated to his sworn enemies, the Philistines.

More than 20 of Rubens' works can be seen every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

VENUS AND MARS

ABOUT 1485

BOTTICELLI, SANDRO

ABOUT 1445–1510

Botticelli was well known for his religious paintings. Venus and Mars, however, is decidedly earthy, jam-packed with sexual innuendo, and was probably a piece of bedroom furniture.

Venus, the goddess of love, has conquered Mars, the god of war, with her overwhelming beauty. Clearly spent after a vigorous love-making session, Mars sleeps it off while Venus looks on. Meanwhile, mischievous satyrs make off with his lance and helmet – phallic symbols that also suggest a ‘make love not war’ message.

You can see more images of the beautiful Venus at the National Gallery, every day, for free, including interpretations by Titian and Rubens.

CHRISTINA OF DENMARK, DUCHESS OF MILAN ¹⁵³⁸

HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER, HANS
1497/8–1543

Holbein's picture of the demure widow Christina of Denmark was a lonely hearts ad for Henry VIII, who was looking for a fourth wife after the death of Jane Seymour.

This portrait was painted when Christina was just sixteen, and a renowned beauty. The King was said to have fallen madly in love with her on the strength of the painting, an infatuation shared with generations of viewers. Fortunately for her, the marriage never was, and she lived into old age.

There are more gently revealing portraits by Holbein at the National Gallery. These

THE ENTOMBMENT

ABOUT 1500–1

MICHELANGELO 1475–1564

This striking early work by Michelangelo, the original Renaissance man and one of the most gifted exponents of 16th century Italian art, was intended as an altarpiece, but never finished.

The central figure of Christ is supported by John the Evangelist, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Mary Magdelene and Mary Salome (a holy woman) are also shown. The empty outline on the right is reserved for the Virgin Mary, in mourning for her son. Michelangelo may have been waiting for rare and costly ultramarine pigment for her traditional blue cloak.

You can see how many of the old masters, including Rembrandt, have depicted Christ's followers in mourning, every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR AT HER TAMBOUR FRAME 1763–4

DROUAIS, FRANÇOIS-HUBERT
1727–1775

Drouais was the fashionable portraitist to the French Court of Louis XV, and Madame de Pompadour the King's mistress. Drouais painted her head first, presumably from life, then added it to the rest of the picture which was on a different canvas. The painting was completed the following year, after Madame de Pompadour's death at the age of just 43.

Highly educated, she's shown here embroidering on a worktable or 'tambour', surrounded by emblems of her interests – books, a mandolin, an artist's folio and her beloved pet dog.

THE SUPPER AT EMMAUS 1601

CARAVAGGIO, MICHELANGELO
MERISI DA 1571–1610

Some see in Caravaggio's dark paintings a reflection of his own character. A volatile visionary, Caravaggio swaggered through the streets of Rome with a sword at his side.

The Supper at Emmaus depicts the appearance of Christ to his disciples after the resurrection. Their outstretched arms draw us into the painting, making us feel like participants in the event, dragging the story from scripture into contemporary life. It still has the power to arrest and dazzle to this day.

The National Gallery has key Caravaggio works from different stages in his career. These pictures belong to the public and entrance to see them is free.

THE AMBASSADORS

1533

HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER, HANS

1497/8–1543

This is a huge, full-length portrait of a couple of young men who had it all. In the pink shirt is Jean de Dinteville, French ambassador to England in 1533. The more sober one is his friend Georges de Selve, the Bishop of Lavaur. They are surrounded by symbolic objects reflecting their education and interests.

Even as he's immortalising them in art, Holbein reminds us we'll all die in the end. Try standing to the right of the painting and bending over. Now look at the curious oblong disc between the ambassadors. You should see a human skull, signifying the of brevity of life.

You can see this and other works by Holbein, every day, for free, at the National Gallery

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE 1520-3

TITIAN

ACTIVE ABOUT 1506, DIED 1576

This is the moment Bacchus, god of wine, emerging from a night on the tiles with his rowdy crew, sets eyes on Ariadne and falls in love.

Ariadne has just been deserted by Theseus after helping him defeat the minotaur. You can see his ship sailing off in the distance. Bacchus raises her up to heaven and turns her into a constellation, represented by the stars above her head. Titian unfolds all the drama and mixed emotions of the scene using his trademark blazing colour and consummate dexterity.

Fantastical Roman myths provide the drama for many classic paintings you can see every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

SALOME RECEIVES THE HEAD OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST 1607–10

CARAVAGGIO, MICHELANGELO
MERISI DA 1571–1610

Salome receives the Head of Saint John the Baptist was painted in Naples not long before Caravaggio's death. It depicts the gruesome New Testament story of Salome, who danced so well for King Herod that he swore he would give her anything. Egged on by her vengeful mother, she asked for the head of John the Baptist on a plate. The pathos and human tragedy of the tale are delivered with exceptional economy and brutal raw power.

You can see how other artists including Cesare and Giampietrino treated the same Bible story, every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

AN EXPERIMENT ON A BIRD IN THE AIR PUMP 1768

WRIGHT 'OF DERBY', JOSEPH
1734–1797

Joseph Wright hailed from Derby, a town that was at the centre of the Industrial Revolution, and his work reflects the progress it brought about.

This painting shows a lecturer conducting a dramatic experiment as a family entertainment. A rare white cockatoo is held in a flask from which the air is being removed. Unless it gets oxygen soon, it will die. The reactions around the candle-lit table are minutely observed – from morbid fascination, to upset, to stoical acceptance. Only the distracted lovers on the left are unmoved.

Wright's candle-lit style was influenced by Caravaggio and his Dutch admirers.

AN ALLEGORY WITH VENUS AND CUPID

PROBABLY 1540–50

BRONZINO 1503–1572

Bronzino was the ultra-fashionable court painter to the Medici family, absolute rulers of Florence. Duke Cosimo was responsible for commissioning this complex allegory.

The salacious An Allegory with Venus and Cupid was a carefully considered present for the King of France, a man with a notorious lust for flesh. Packed with riddles and symbolism, it would have given him plenty of excuse to ponder the work, ogling the sensual bodies of the cavorting Venus and Cupid, while decoding its finer meaning.

You can see more images of the beautiful goddess Venus. including interpretations

SUNFLOWERS 1888

VAN GOGH, VINCENT 1853–1890

Van Gogh painted a series of sunflowers anticipating the arrival of his friend – the poet-artist Paul Gauguin – to his house in Arles, France in 1888.

The painting is strikingly yellow, using newly invented pigments that made vibrant new colours possible. For van Gogh, yellow symbolised happiness. This is ironic, because it was the heated rows he had while working with Gauguin that finally tipped the troubled artist into despair and madness.

Sunflowers is the best-selling postcard and poster at the National Gallery, where you can see more works by van Gogh and Gauguin every day, for free.

CALAIS PIER 1803

TURNER, JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM
1775–1851

Based on Turner's very first trip abroad the previous year, the dramatic Calais Pier is born from frightening reality. On a preliminary sketch, Turner noted the seas had been so rough he was 'nearly swamp't'.

The raging, turbulent movement of the waves, the looming clouds and sun breaking through on to the ship's sails – almost like a spotlight – are all deftly handled. Yet when he first exhibited the picture at the Royal Academy in 1803, he was criticised for not having finished the foreground.

You can see more classic seascapes by Turner and the painters who influenced him, every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST 1636–8

REMBRANDT 1606–1669

Rembrandt wanted to be remembered as a religious history painter. But in the strictly Calvinist Dutch Republic, lavish adornment of churches was a no-no.

Instead, Rembrandt recreated Bible scenes for private clients. This one is the story of the King of Babylon, who gives a splendid feast for his nobles using sacred vessels looted from the Temple in Jerusalem. A divine hand dramatically appears, carving an inscription on the wall foretelling the ruin of Belshazzar's kingdom. Framed and lit like a movie still, Rembrandt skilfully captures the dread and horror of the guests.

You can see more startling Biblical scenes every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

THE DOGE LEONARDO LOREDAN 1501–4

BELLINI, GIOVANNI

ACTIVE ABOUT 1459, DIED 1516

Bellini hailed from the leading artistic dynasty of 15th century Venice. His father and brother were noted painters charged with official state commissions like this one.

Doge Leonardo Loredan was top dog in the Venetian Republic, and shown here in full ceremonial regalia. Bellini subtly tells us about him. The shadowed side of the face is gentler-looking than the starker left side. You can probably make out the sun in the sitter's eyes – it's fairly low in the sky, perhaps a comment on the Doge's advancing years.

You can see more deeply perceptive portraits like this one every day, for free,

GROUP PORTRAIT

1657

EECKHOUT, GERBRAND VAN DEN

1621–1674

Eeckhout was one of Rembrandt's favourite pupils. Though he had his master's style off to a tee, he wasn't quite so daringly original.

The painting is typical of group portraits of the age, depicting prosperous, behatted businessmen in the equivalent of a team photo. This particular guild included the men who made barrels for the wine imported into Amsterdam, and others who sampled and bottled it. One of the gents in the picture is Eeckhout's brother.

You can see other group portraits by Rembrandt and his followers every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

ST MICHAEL TRIUMPHS OVER THE DEVIL 1468

BERMEJO, BARTOLOMÉ
ABOUT 1440–AFTER 1495

Bartolomé Bermejo was a loud, proud 15th century redhead, signing his pictures in Latin *bartolomeus ruebus* ('Red Bartholomew').

Antonio Juan, the feudal lord of Tous, near Valencia, commissioned this painting as an altarpiece. He's on the left watching the battle between good and evil as the golden-armoured St Michael gets to work. The story is from the book of Revelations, though the devil – part bat, reptile, bird, moth, with gleaming eyes and nipples – is a creature from Bermejo's imagination.

Many other Biblical stories are brought to life by different artists at the National Gallery. These pictures belong to the

SURPRISED! 1891

ROUSSEAU, HENRI 1844–1910

Never one to play by the rules, Rousseau discovered art in his forties, after previous careers as a regimental bandsman and toll collector. Though he claimed his stylised, highly patterned jungle paintings were informed by first-hand experience with the French army in Mexico, it's more likely they were inspired by prints, visits to the local botanical gardens and even humble house plants.

When he first exhibited this dreamlike canvas in 1891, Rousseau called it 'Surpris!' a reference to explorers outside the picture frame about to be pounced on by the tiger. Today, you can see it for free at the National Gallery.

THE SKIFF 1875

RENOIR, PIERRE-AUGUSTE 1841–1919

The Skiff is an Impressionist vision of suburban leisure, as two young women enjoy a lazy summer's day on the river. The dazzling blue of the water and the bright chrome orange of the boat also provided an ideal opportunity for Renoir to test Impressionist colour theory. They are opposites on the colour scale and create an intense contrast when put together. Looks like it worked.

You can see how other Impressionists, including Monet, Pissaro and Sisley portrayed people enjoying their time off, at the National Gallery. These pictures belong to the public and entrance to see them is free.

LADY COCKBURN AND HER THREE ELDEST SONS ¹⁷⁷³

REYNOLDS, SIR JOSHUA 1723–1792

Son of a Devonshire village school master, the tenacious Joshua Reynolds rose to become the most sought-after portrait painter of his age. He was a founder of the Royal Academy, and friend to the most eminent men of letters in England.

Lady Cockburn and her Three Eldest Sons is a perfect example of the way he idealised his subjects by portraying them in a classical context. Reynolds paints Lady Cockburn as the allegorical figure Charity, who is traditionally shown with three children in this way. James, the older boy on the left, is based on Cupid, as seen in *The Rokeby Venus* by Velázquez.

All of these paintings can be seen every day for free at the National Gallery

PSYCHE SHOWING HER SISTERS HER GIFTS FROM CUPID

1753

FRAGONARD, JEAN-HONORÉ

1732–1806

Fragonard was an 18th century French prodigy, prize-winning student of François Boucher and master of many media. This elaborate allegorical picture was completed when he was only 21, and he was already starting to develop a distinctive style.

Psyche is showing off a treasure trove of gifts from her lover Cupid, to her sisters. They're green with envy and persuade her to blow Cupid's cover, breaking the conditions of their romance. The centre of the painting is bright and crisp, the edges dark and murky, achieving a sense of deep foreboding.

See many more paintings based on classical myths and legends every day

THE TRIUMPH OF PAN 1636

NICOLAS POUSSIN 1594–1665

The Triumph of Pan shows a wild, pagan celebration in full swing. It's packed with literary and visual references, demonstrating not only Poussin's mastery of painting, but his deep classical scholarship.

The work belonged to Cardinal Richelieu, and was housed in an extravagant room dripping with fine art and gilt décor.

There are more highly populated mythological paintings by Poussin at the National Gallery, which you can see every day, for free.

A YOUNG WOMAN STANDING AT A VIRGINAL ABOUT 1670–2

VERMEER, JOHANNES 1632–1675

Only around 30 paintings by Vermeer are known today. That's because he worked very slowly, ran an inn and an art dealership, and died at just 43.

This serene domestic interior bears all the hallmarks of his paintings. The arrangement is fastidious, a finely balanced geometry containing beautifully worked details. And it tells a story. The woman, looking expectantly in our direction, plays music reminding her of the man who isn't there, signified by the empty chair. Cupid, in the painting behind her, holds up a single playing card, a symbol of fidelity.

You can see other seductive and

THE FOUR ELEMENTS: EARTH ¹⁵⁶⁹

BEUCKELAER, JOACHIM
ACTIVE 1560–74

Beuckelaer was a pioneer of still life painting. At first glance, this picture appears to be of a common food market. If you look at the top left-hand corner, however, the Holy Family can be made out crossing a bridge, adding a religious message to an everyday scene.

A warning against earthly gratification, the over-abundance of fruit and vegetables in the foreground is painted with tempting sensuality. There are 16 different types of produce shown, which appear to be tumbling out of the painting towards the viewer.

You can see works by the artists who continued Beuckelaer's legacy, at the

CAVALRY MAKING A SORTIE FROM A FORT ON A HILL 1646

WOUWERMANS, PHILIPS 1619–1668

Wouwermans was a prolific and enormously popular Dutch painter of battle and hunting scenes. Many of his paintings feature a distinctive white horse, seen from behind – widely recognised as the artist's trademark.

This is one of his largest battle paintings. The brooding, chaotic scene appears to be fictional, but Wouwerman's flair for dramatic composition and skill as an animal painter is very evident. He doesn't shirk the realities of warfare either – the picture features soldiers with amputated limbs.

You can see this and other Wouwermans paintings every day, for free, at the National Gallery

PHILIP IV OF SPAIN IN BROWN AND SILVER

ABOUT 1631–2

VELÁZQUEZ, DIEGO 1599–1660

Velázquez became an official court painter when he was 24 and Philip IV was just 18. The young men were close – when Velázquez left Madrid to study in Italy for two years, Philip refused to be portrayed by anyone else.

This sympathetic royal portrait was painted soon after Velázquez's return in 1631. Though the pose is confident, there's a certain timidity in Philip's eyes. The real triumph of the work is the costume, rendered in freely brushed blobs and strokes to create an impression of glinting silver embroidery over rich, lustrous cloth.

Many intriguing approaches to portraiture

MADAME MOITESSIER 1856

INGRES, JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE
1780–1867

It's a miracle we're looking at Ingres' opulent portrait of Madame Moitessier at all. Approached by her rich banker husband in 1847, Ingres refused to take on the commission. But once he'd seen the fragrant Inés in the flesh, he was smitten and changed his mind. Even then, it took him 12 years to complete, by which time he was an old man of 76.

Madame Moitessier's pose is inspired by an ancient Roman wall painting of a goddess, so maybe Ingres saw her as an ideal of classical beauty.

More paintings by Ingres can be seen every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

AFTER THE BATH, WOMAN DRYING HERSELF ABOUT 1890–5

DEGAS, HILAIRE-GERMAIN-EDGAR
1834–1917

Plagued by eye trouble, in later life Degas was confined to indoor subjects, where he could control the lighting and conditions. He favoured bright pastels, not only because they produced vivid, modern colours, but because he could see them more easily.

The woman in the painting is going about an intimate and everyday act, seemingly unaware of the viewer. Degas seems to have extended his composition while working on it, adding other pieces of paper. He's exploited the flexibility of his pastels to create sumptuous textures and blurred contours suggesting movement.

You can find out how other artists have approached the ever-fascinating

THE WATER-LILY POND 1899

MONET, CLAUDE-OSCAR 1840–1926

The Impressionists were obsessed with all things Japanese. Once he became rich and famous, Monet painstakingly cultivated an Oriental water garden, complete with a typically simple arching bridge, on his estate at Giverny in rural France.

Then he took to painting it. Again, and again, and again. There are at least 18 different views of Monet's lily pond with the Japanese bridge at various times of day, all from the same perspective. They are a triumph of vision and technique, seemingly disjointed fragments coming together to form a shimmering whole.

You can see more landscapes by Monet and the other Impressionists every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

AN EXTENSIVE LANDSCAPE WITH A ROAD BY A RIVER ¹⁶⁵⁵

KONINCK, PHILIPS 1619–1688

The Amsterdam artist Koninck may well have been a pupil of Rembrandt's. His sweeping, low-skied, panoramic views are part of the tradition of distinctive Dutch landscape art.

This painting may be an actual place, or simply the fruit of Koninck's imagination. Depth is suggested by varied application of the paint, quite rough at the front, very detailed in the middle, with bold strokes of pure colour in the distance. Often, Koninck would ask a fellow artist to place figures into the landscape for him, but here he seems to have painted them himself.

See other beautiful views and landscapes

WHISTLEJACKET

ABOUT 1762

STUBBS, GEORGE 1724–1806

Owned by the Marquess of Rockingham, Whistlejacket was one of the most celebrated race horses of the day.

Legend has it that George III was to appear riding the horse in the painting, but Rockingham later changed his mind when they had political differences.

George Stubbs was a stickler for accuracy. He studied anatomy and dissected horses so he could get them absolutely right.

It worked. When Whistlejacket caught a glimpse of his likeness while modelling, he allegedly started trying to attack the canvas.

Whistlejacket is one of the largest paintings at the National Gallery, and you can see it every day, for free.

SEAPORT WITH THE EMBARKATION OF SAINT URSULA 1641

CLAUDE (CLAUDE LORRAIN)

1604/5?–1682

Claude is thought to have emigrated to Rome as a boy to work as a pastry chef. His poetic reinventions of a Golden Age had a profound influence on landscape painting, and landscape itself, particularly in 18th century England.

The story of Saint Ursula was popular during the Renaissance, but was less common during Claude's time. According to legend, she was a British princess who made a pilgrimage to Rome, with eleven thousand virgin companions. On their way back, they were slaughtered by pagan Huns at Cologne when Ursula refused to marry their chieftan. This picture shows her in happier times, radiant in the golden morning sun.

SELF PORTRAIT AT THE AGE OF 34

1640

REMBRANDT 1606–1669

One of Rembrandt's favourite subjects was himself. It's reckoned he painted between 50 and 60 self portraits.

Here, Rembrandt was at the height of his powers, and wasn't about to let anyone forget it. He's dressed in exotic and expensive garments to show how successful he is – a sort of 17th century equivalent of bling. His pose mimics Titian's Man With A Quilted Sleeve inviting direct comparison with this Italian master. It's possible Rembrandt even cheekily nicked some of the great man's brush techniques.

Rembrandt is widely regarded as the foremost painter of the Dutch Golden Age. Twenty of his works – as well as Titian's

THE FIGHTING TEMERAIRE 1839

TURNER, JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM
1775–1851

The full title is The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her Last Berth to be broken up, 1838. It shows the ghostly, 98-gun ship Temeraire, which played a crucial role in the battle of Trafalgar, on its way up the Thames to be scrapped. Turner is using artistic licence – the masts would already have been chopped for firewood, and the sun is in the wrong position. Still his vision beautifully conveys the end of an era. Turner called the painting 'My Darling', and never sold it.

The Fighting Temeraire was voted the nation's favourite painting by Radio 4 listeners and you can see every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

THE ARNOLFINI PORTRAIT 1434

EYCK, JAN VAN

ACTIVE 1422, DIED 1441

Van Eyck used oil paints in a dramatic way never seen before. He pushed the medium to its limits, achieving all kinds of new textures and effects.

His double portrait of the wealthy merchant Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini and his wife isn't – as was once thought – a wedding portrait. Nor is the wife pregnant – it's just the fashionable look of the time. In the mirror on the back wall, you can make out the guests Arnolfini is greeting with his raised right hand. Anticipating modern graffiti, the ornate Latin signature over the mirror reads 'Jan van Eyck was here 1434'.

You can see the Arnolfini Portrait every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

CORNER OF A CAFE-CONCERT

PROBABLY 1878–80

MANET, EDOUARD 1832–1883

Manet's paintings caused a real stir, making him a hero to the emerging Impressionists who were looking to shake up the status quo.

Corner of a Café-Concert is actually the right half of a painting, enlarged and with a new background added. It captures one of Manet's favourite watering holes, the Brasserie Reichshoffen on the Boulevard Rochechouart. Manet's observations of 19th century life are fluid and rough-edged, but capture a real sense of the colour and movement of Paris.

You can see other works by Manet and impressions of city life every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

THE HAY WAIN 1821

CONSTABLE, JOHN 1776–1837

It's one of the nation's best-loved paintings now, but when Constable first exhibited the picturesque Hay Wain in the early 1820s, he didn't get a sniff of a sale. In fact, he had to take it over to France to find a buyer.

The setting is the River Stour near Flatford in Suffolk, which remains remarkably similar and unspoiled today. The rustic cart (or hay wain) is soaking its wooden wheels to stop them cracking on a journey in the heat of the sun.

You can see more sublime English landscapes by Constable, including Weymouth Bay and Stratford Mill, for free, at the National Gallery.

BATHERS AT LA GRENOUILLERE 1869

MONET, CLAUDE-OSCAR 1840–1926

In the summer of 1869, Monet worked alongside Renoir at La Grenouillère, a rather risqué, bohemian resort on the Seine just outside Paris.

Fresh, direct and highly experimental, *Bathers at La Grenouillère* was to become one of Impressionism's most famous pictures. But in fact, it was really only a quick sketch for a more ambitious composition (now lost), to be painted back in the studio. The distinctive style couldn't have been achieved without recent innovations in artists' materials – portable tubes of oil paint and flat brushes.

More works by Monet and other leading lights of the Impressionist movement can be seen every day, for free, at the National Gallery.

A WHEATFIELD WITH CYPRESSES

1889

VAN GOGH, VINCENT 1853–1890

After his breakdown and self-mutilation, Vincent van Gogh checked himself into the St-Rémy mental asylum, near Arles. During a phenomenally productive year in the institution, he completed around 150 canvasses.

Among them were three versions of the turbulent, swirling Wheatfield with Cypresses. The blazing yellow wheatfield represents the cycle of life and the creative force. The tall, dark cypress tree is native to Provence and associated with death. Soon after leaving St-Rémy, van Gogh shot himself in the chest – in a wheatfield. He died two days later.

You can see more of van Gogh's prescient paintings every day, for free, at the