ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST

Style & Society: Dressing the Georgians

Plain English Script

THE KING'S GALLERY,
PALACE OF HOLYROODHOUSE

Introduction

Welcome to The King's Gallery and to *Style & Society: Dressing the Georgians*. In this exhibition we will be looking at 18th-century British fashion. It will tell us much more than what people wore and how they looked.

This exhibition uses clothes and fashion to tell a wider story about Georgian society. It shows how clothes can reveal information about the people sitting for paintings, but also about changes in society, about new ways of doing things, about travel, or about politics. Dress is much more than just what we see on the surface: when you look deeper it gives much more information about what was happening in the world at that time.

1. Georg Wilhelm Lafontaine, *George I*

This portrait shows George I, the first of the kings from Hanover, in northern Germany. His plain brown coat suggests that he did not really care about fashion. But he might be wearing it because he wants to send out an important message to the people looking at the portrait — about his love and commitment towards Great Britain. The coat is made of wool, and the country's textile industry at that time was based mainly on wool. His son, George II, whose portrait is hanging on the next wall, preferred richer materials. But even as an old man, he carried on wearing the same kind of clothes, wigs and shoes that he wore when he was a young man.

People who wanted to follow the latest fashion trends would not find them worn by the new royal family – they would have to look for them somewhere else. What people at the royal court wore felt traditional and out of date, so

the upper class and the growing middle class of professional people looked the other way – they looked lower down the social scale for more informal styles to wear. Different classes of people were now wearing similar clothes, which made it harder to tell which class they came from: one visitor to Britain said, “everyone, even the shoemaker, is dressed alike.”

As you go through the rooms of the exhibition, you will see, close up, remarkable examples of 18th-century clothes which have survived. They give a clear understanding of the materials, construction and craftsmanship of the outfits and objects shown in portraits, prints and drawings.

2. William Hogarth (1697-1764) *David Garrick with his Wife Eva-Maria Veigel* c.1757-64

Celebrated actor-manager David Garrick was a frequent subject in 18th century portraits. But here his wife, the dancer Eva-Maria Veigel, steals the show with her eye-catching gown.

Quite a few gowns in this egg yolk yellow colour from around this time have survived. They are probably linked with the liking for things connected to China around this time: we see across the decorative arts. Yellow in this shade was closely associated with the Emperor in China. It was made from an expensive type of dye.

Veigel's gown is in a style called a 'robe à la française' or a 'sacque'. It is known as an "open gown" because the edges at the front are not joined together. The gap between them is filled by a separate triangular piece of fabric called a 'stomacher', and lower down we see a petticoat.

The 18th century definition of a petticoat was much wider than a modern one. Today we expect a petticoat to be hidden by a skirt worn on top. In the same way, a petticoat at that time might be a skirt designed to be worn under other petticoats. But a petticoat then might also be designed to be seen.

If Eva-Maria turned round, we would see one of the sacque's characteristic features at the back: a number of box pleats running from the shoulders. This meant that there was a huge expanse of fabric that flowed from the shoulder line down the back all the way to the ground. It was almost like a canvas, to show off these beautiful textiles.

As she reaches to pluck the quill pen from her husband's hand, sleeve flounces made of layers of silk and lace hang down at her elbows. A similar example is in the display case nearby. Lace was often the most expensive part of an outfit, after jewellery. It was made slowly and carefully using a needle or bobbins.

Fifty centimetres of the very finest quality lace – just enough for a sleeve flounce – might take a lacemaker about a year to produce, even working 15 hours a day.

3. Attributed to the studio of François-Hubert Drouais (1727-75)
***Madame de Pompadour* (1722-64) after 1764**

Roll of Chinese hand-painted silk

In Europe in the 18th century many fashions in clothes started in France. One of the people with the most influence when it came to fashion, over a period of some twenty years, was Madame de Pompadour. She is pictured here working on a piece of embroidery stretched on a rectangular embroidery frame known as a tambour frame.

Madame de Pompadour first met King Louis XV of France on a hunting trip. Shortly after that they met again at a masquerade ball at the Palace of Versailles where she was dressed as a shepherdess and the King as a yew tree! Within weeks Madame de Pompadour became the King's mistress. She had her own suite of rooms at the Palace, where she stayed her whole life as his close friend and advisor.

Madame de Pompadour is wearing a type of jacket known as a 'sacque' made from a floral fabric. It is difficult to tell whether this is a printed cotton or a painted silk. An example of the type of painted silk that it might have been made of is shown alongside. The silk was made in China for European customers.

Before it could be painted, the plain cream silk would have been brushed with a mixture of glue and a chemical called 'alum'. This process was called 'sizing'. It acted like a primer, so that the paints would stick but not spread. Then the design would have been outlined in ink, or by using a metal pen.

The bright colours for the different patterns were made by painting the design with lead white and then applying thick colour on top. The colours were made from the same materials used for easel painting, for example malachite for green, or vermillion for red. Sometimes touches of silver were used to emphasise the outlines.

Pastel shades and floral designs were typical of the decorative style known as 'rococo' which is very closely associated with Madame de Pompadour, with all her frills, ruffles and bows. She wore the colour pink all the time, so when, in

1758, the French porcelain manufacturer Sèvres created a line of porcelain in a new shade of pink –- which is ‘rose’ in French – they called it ‘Rose Pompadour’.

4. Pietro Longhi (Venice C. 1701-Venice 1785) *The Married Couple's Breakfast* Signed and dated 1744.

Light streams onto a bed as the morning routine begins. A woman, dressed in a loose, rose-coloured gown over a long white undergarment, sits on a chair and drinks a cup of coffee or hot chocolate. She leans against her husband, who is sitting up in bed, wearing a linen shirt.

In formal portraits, these layers – underwear and shirts – are usually hidden by upper layers of clothing. We might see them at the cuffs or at the collar, but we don't usually see the full items as we see them here. So, this picture is unusual and interesting.

Everybody wore this type of underlayer, whatever their position in society. For the rich underclothes were made of expensive silky fabric. Poor people wore cheaper, thicker materials. Undergarments and shirts were comfortable next to the skin, but also hardwearing, protecting the clothes on top of them from sweat and dirt. They washed well too.

Wearing clean underwear was seen as an important part of respectability, so even poorer members of society would try and change their linens every day. A person might have two shirts; one in the wash and one for wearing. Rich families would have their laundry done by a laundress. Heavy laundry would be taken away for cleaning to remove dirt and stains. But more delicate items like cuffs, possibly made of lace, would be cleaned at home, so that a lady's maid could look after them properly.

Clothing was so highly valued by the Georgians that it was listed in household records and also in marriage contracts and wills. Whenever possible it was

recycled – the servants in this picture may be wearing their employers' hand-me-downs. New items were made carefully, with an eye on economy.

Undergarments like those in the painting were usually made from a number of straight-sided shapes, such as squares, rectangles and triangles, The clothes-makers would cut a few of them at a time from a roll of material, so that every scrap of material was used, with very little wasted.

5. Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88*) Queen Charlotte* (1744-1818) c. 1781

Whatever the fashionable upper-class people wore when they were not at the palace, when they were in the presence of the King and Queen court rules set out the style of formal dress they had to wear. These styles were much more old-fashioned than the clothes shown in the latest magazines. For women that meant a skirt over a hooped underskirt—like the light, gold-spangled, silk gown worn by Queen Charlotte in this portrait by Thomas Gainsborough. This was the style she *insisted* all women wore at court—even though it had long ago stopped being fashionable.

Fortunately for the women wearing these skirts, palaces and other grand buildings had doorways wide enough for them to pass through without turning sideways. Even so it could be difficult, with such a lot of heavy fabric. The embroidery on the skirts looked delicate but was often decorated with precious metals.

Although the rigid rules about hooped underskirts stayed in place until 1820, some women still managed to follow new trends. They kept the traditional style of court dress but made the dress with more up to date fabrics and fabric designs. Nearby you will see a dress made of muslin, a delicate type of a woven cotton fabric that had recently started to arrive in Europe from India. It may have been decorated in very fine embroidery using real silver, but wearing this light and flimsy dress at court might have raised eyebrows and disapproving looks. Wearing any fabric other than British-made silks was considered unpatriotic.

6. *Court suit* c. 1760s.

The style of women's dresses changed several times in the Georgian period, but men's clothes stayed much the same as when they were first worn in the 17th century. The breeches, waistcoat and coat all match in this close-fitting suit, which is made of red and gold cut silk velvet. A close-up look reveals a pattern which looks like tiny bricks. The gold thread running through the fabric would have sparkled in candlelight. It is an outfit which can be worn at the most important court occasions—like a ball held in honour of the king's birthday.

It was important that clothes worn at occasions like this were new, and that they had been bought specially for that event. It would not have been proper to appear in something that had been worn already. Being fashionable was less important, and actually the quality of the materials clothes were made from, and their trimmings, changed more often than the style of the clothes.

Behind you, to the left of the staircase, is a portrait of Johann Christian Fischer. It shows a complete outfit including wig, stockings and buckled shoes.

The court suit here is not exactly the same as the one worn by Johann Christian Fischer, but it is interesting to compare paintings with clothing which has survived, as they each give us different information.

Examining a piece of clothing reveals how it was constructed and how it felt to touch. An artist making a portrait chooses everything included in it very carefully. Sometimes the artist will show details of clothes in a more favourable light: tidy, unwrinkled—and cleaner.

In most formal portraits men wear white stockings, which suggests that they are trying to show off their best clothes. White stockings were expensive because they were usually made of silk and were hard to keep clean. In reality, men wore stockings in a variety of colours. Examples in museum collections can be blue, green or red, but in paintings coloured stockings are not seen as often as white ones.

The next stop is the painting on the other side of the stairs.

7. David Wilkie, *George IV*

In just one hour, dressed as in this magnificent painting, King George IV was introduced to over 1200 people during his visit to Edinburgh in 1822. The visit was the first by a ruling monarch for nearly 200 years. His friend the novelist Sir Walter Scott organised three weeks of celebration and public events, and he encouraged the crowds to wear tartan. The King loved clothes and was only too happy to do just that. He wore Highland Dress, a tartan collection made

especially for a formal court reception held here at the Palace of Holyroodhouse.

The King's outfit was designed by William Murray, an actor and theatre manager, who knew that a good outfit could have a dramatic effect.

By appearing in Royal Stuart tartan, George IV romanticised the Scottish national identity and presented himself as a specifically Scottish monarch, heir to both the Hanoverians and the Jacobites.

No expense was spared: the King's outfit included a red silk waistcoat and a doublet, lined in rose pink silk, and embroidered with a twirling thistle pattern in gold thread and sequins. This is just visible in this painting on the collar and cuffs. The final bill from George Hunter & Co in Princes Street came to a staggering £1,354.18—more than £140,000 today.

The accessories and weapons worn by George IV that day were sent to the artist David Wilkie when he was painting this portrait several years later. They are displayed in the cabinet opposite this painting. This meant he could reproduce accurately the basket-shaped hilt of the Highland sword that the King rests his left hand on, and the dirk—or knife—with a large aquamarine inset into the hilt, that hangs from the wide leather sash belt with its prominent rectangular gold buckle.

Even so, Wilkie's portrait is not completely accurate. It shows the king with bare legs. In fact, he had been supplied with "buff-coloured trowsers like flesh to imitate his Royal knees". Cartoons from the time show the "Royal knees" as

fat and bloated. Perhaps that explains why Wilkie has lengthened the King's kilt, so it casts a slight shadow….

For the next stop, make your way through the doorway to the left of the portrait of Queen Charlotte, to a cabinet containing an item of clothing.

8. Stays, c.1780s.

In pictures the viewer sees the top layer of clothing and is usually only aware of layers underneath because of the shape they give to the body. The underwear here was known as a pair of stays. They were worn on top of a woman's linen undergarment, creating a fashionable body shape and a smooth base for layers of clothing on top.

These stays are stiffened with what people often call whalebone. But whalebone does not refer to the parts of a whale skeleton. Rather it is material

called baleen, from the jaws of some whales. It is the same material as our hair and fingernails.

Here we have horizontal channels with baleen in them across the breast area, and diagonally placed strips at either side of the front centre. It is designed to create a beautiful, curved shape across the front of the body. The little skirts at the bottom of the stays allowed them to curve into the waist and out again without pressing into the waist.

These stays have back lacing with a single lace, laced from the bottom in a spiral pattern up to the top. Stays that were fastened too tightly could limit free movement but generally they could be supportive and comfortable and working women wore them as well.

9. George Stubbs (1724-1806) *Laetitia, Lady Lade* (d. 1825) Signed and dated 1793.

George Stubbs has painted Laetitia, Lady Lade, on a rearing horse showing off the full, sweeping petticoat of her elegant dark blue riding habit, with its double row of gold buttons on a tight-fitting short jacket.

A riding habit like this would have been made in the same way as a man's suit. They were usually tailored by men, unlike dresses which were made by women mantua-makers. For this reason, they buttoned left over right like men's coats, and often included pockets. They were made of similar materials: broadcloth, worsted and linen.

Tailored styles like the woman's riding habit and man's frock coat came from clothes worn for outdoor country pursuits. They became popular on the continent during the last quarter of the 18th century as France and the rest of Europe were gripped by 'Anglomania', which was a passionate enthusiasm for English fashion. People loved the elegant tailoring, which fitted well in many different circumstances – a woman did not have to ride a horse like Lady Lade to wear a riding habit.

Riding habits were comfortable and warm, and they could be worn at home before changing into full dress. They could also be worn while visiting or travelling. They were often accessorised with items usually found in a man's wardrobe such as cravats, hats, jockey caps, boots, and riding crops.

This blurring of differences between clothes worn by men and women sometimes caused confusion. The author Samuel Richardson grumbled, 'One cannot easily distinguish your sex in it, for you neither look like a modest girl in it, nor an agreeable boy'.

10.Louis Gabriel Blanchet (1705-72) ***Prince Charles Edward Stuart*** **(1720-88)**

Attributed to David Morier (1705?-70) ***An Incident in the Rebellion of 1745*** **c. 1753**

This is Charles Edward Stuart, the grandson of King James VII of Scotland and II of England. He was known as the 'Young Pretender' and led the Jacobite cause, trying to reclaim the English and Scottish thrones from George II.

In this painting the Prince is only 19 years old. He is shown as a warrior, wearing a breastplate. One gloveless hand is resting on a helmet, the other is on his sword hilt.

Everyone called him Bonnie Prince Charlie. He had lived his whole life in exile in Italy and France, and it would be another six years after this portrait was painted before he came to Scotland to bring together an army of supporters and start his advance on London. In the meantime, since he was not able to be here in person, he had to make sure people saw pictures of him. This was hugely important for getting people to recognise and support him and his cause. Portraits like this one show he is a king in waiting.

Just as his father did, he's wearing both the Order of the Thistle, an order associated with Scotland, and the blue sash of the Order of the Garter, demonstrating his right to rule over both countries.

Before long, the brightly-coloured tartan came to be linked closely to Charles Edward Stuart and his Jacobite followers. This is a kind of fashion "shorthand" used for both sides in the battle shown in *An Incident in the Rebellion of 1745* which hangs nearby. Highlanders wear tartan. They are made to look savage and muscular. They are fighting British soldiers who are wearing bright red coats (which would really have been a dull brick red, as they were dyed with the root of the madder plant).

The British government felt threatened by tartan, which had the power to unite supporters of the Jacobite cause. As soon as British government forces had defeated him at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, it moved quickly to get rid

of their unofficial uniform. An Act of Parliament banned men in Scotland from wearing Highland dress. Court cases were rare but if men were convicted the punishment was severe: six months in prison or, for repeat offenders, being sent to live in North America for seven years.

11.Fan, 1783

Clothes were very expensive and took a long time to make so they were worn, and seen, several times. Georgians used fashionable accessories to add variety and a personal touch to their outfits.

A fan, like this one, showed its owner was up to date with both the latest fashions and also world events. The scene pictured is the second, manned hot air balloon flight that took place in December 1783 in Paris. The two elegantly dressed couples represent the crowds of enthusiastic people watching. The excitement produced by this scientific breakthrough triggered many ballooning-related souvenirs which were snapped up by people eager to follow the latest fashion. The souvenirs were not just fans – there were ceramics and textiles, such as handkerchiefs and waistcoats.

The most fashionable fans in the 1750s, like this one, opened to 180 degrees, allowing the carrier to show off their skill in handling the fan. A quick flick of

the wrist opened the fan out to reveal the artistic scene on its folds. Another flick snapped it shut again to show richly-decorated and finely-carved guards—or outer sticks—made of precious materials such as ivory, mother-of-pearl, wood, bone or tortoiseshell.

Another fashionable 18th century craze, snuff-taking, called for similar skills. It involved breathing in a pinch of scented powdered tobacco through the nostrils. Men and women showed off their good taste in finely designed snuff boxes which might be gilded, set with jewels, or painted with a miniature scene. Two examples are displayed nearby. Sometimes a quick glimpse of words included in the design might show off important connections – a way of name-dropping which was silent but effective! The Georgians could never have too many snuff boxes. Queen Charlotte had over 90 and people said that Viscount Petersham had a different one for every day of the year.

12.Benjamin West (1738-1820) *Prince Octavius* (1779-83) 1782

Benjamin West (1738-1820) *Six children of George III*, 1776

Instead of being a time when they were always being told what to do and then being told off for not doing it right, childhood was now a time to be enjoyed. Children were encouraged to be creative and to explore the world around them. They needed clothes that allowed them more freedom to move about.

Benjamin West's full-length portrait of Prince Octavius, son of George III and Queen Charlotte, provides an example – the prince is wearing a new type of boys' clothing – the 'skeleton suit'.

The suit is a jacket and trousers joined together at the waist. It is a kind of 'onesie' that is made in hardwearing fabrics such as nankeen cotton that would have been easy to wash. It allows a child to be a child.

Octavius's older brother, Prince Augustus, was not so lucky, or comfortable. He is pictured at a similar age in Benjamin West's earlier large portrait hanging nearby. He is already wearing a small version of an adult man's coat and breeches. It is made of silk, which is not suitable material for a child to play in, and it has buttons which are hard to fasten. The stockings fall down when a boy runs around and plays ball with his dog. On the far right of the canvas, another brother, blonde-haired Prince Adolphus (helping to hold up baby Princess Mary), is in a simple white frock dress. This is a style worn by both young boys and young girls.

One of the interesting things about children's clothes around this time is that some of the styles that are worn by both boys and girls turn into fashionable styles of dress for adults later on. For example, in the 1780s women started wearing a style of dress very similar to the frock dresses worn by small children like Prince Adolphus. It was known as the "chemise gown" and was made in

the same way as the child’s dress, using a tube of fabric with gathers and drawstrings at the neckline and under the

13.Circle of Francis Cotes (1726–70), *George III*, c.1750–1800.
Wig bag, c.1760–90.

George III is wearing a style of wig known as a 'queue' where the hair has been caught into a tail at the back. The tail could be formed into ringlets and tied with a bow, or placed into a silk bag at the back of the neck.

This 'wig bag' was designed to protect clothes from the powder and pomade (scented ointment) used to style the wig, and also to stop it from drying out. In this portrait it is fastened at the back with a bow, with the ends of the ribbons brought round to the front, tied again and tucked out of sight. This is a style known as 'en solitaire'. In the case nearby there is a very similar wig bag made of black silk, with black ribbons. The ribbons have tiny loops of thread along the edges for decoration.

At the beginning of the 18th century even the cheapest wig cost around £3, which is more than £400 today. But wigs became cheaper over the course of the century, which made them much more widely available. Soon they became something that any respectable man would be expected to wear. By the 1740s all men apart from those from the lowest classes would have worn a wig. Anyone appearing in public without one was thought to be not a real man and offensive.

The most expensive wigs were made to measure from human hair. Top of the range was brown hair from youthful country girls, free from damage caused by city fumes and too much hairdressing. Poorer people wore wigs made from goat, horse or cow hair. They were often second hand, sometimes bought by

paying a penny to have a lucky dip into a sack of old wigs of uncertain origin. Wigs were really easy to steal – they could be pulled from the head of the wearer with a hook, or even, according to some accounts, removed by trained monkeys!

14.Jens Juel (1745-1802) ***Princess Louise Augusta of Denmark, later Duchess of Augustenburg*** **(1771-1843) 1784**

People often assume that women in portraits from this period are wearing wigs. In fact, the hair that we see is usually a woman's own hair stretched and moulded over pads. It might have extensions, such as fake curls or extra hairpieces, but the hair itself is usually a woman's own hair.

From the 1760s hairstyles grew taller and taller. They reached a peak around the middle of the 1770s when the hair of the French Queen, Marie Antoinette, measured a towering 91cm—around 36 inches! Jens Juel painted this portrait of Princess Louise Augusta of Denmark, George III's twelve-year-old niece, in 1784. By this time the height of the hair is being balanced out with more width. It provided a perfect cushion for a hair ornament of roses, orange blossom, and a striped ribbon that matches her dress.

Making a complicated hairstyle like this was done in stages. At this time soap and water were not used to clean hair – this only became the usual practice in the 19th century. People thought it was more hygienic to clean the hair while it was dry, by regular combing and applying pomade and powder. Pomade is an oily material which comes from animal fat, and it was used to remove dirt and soften the hair. The powder was put on with bellows or a shaker – like the ones displayed nearby. It soaked up the grease just as dry shampoo does today, and made the hair less slippery and easier to style and set. Finally, any extensions were blended in by putting more powder on, making all the pieces look like they belonged naturally together.

The profession looking after hair had traditionally been the barber. But barbers were thought of more as part of the medical community, using a wide range of activities to care for the body, for example, pulling out teeth and bloodletting.

Styling hair and resetting wigs called for a more creative approach. Suddenly there was an explosion in demand for a new profession of specialists known as ‘hairdressers’. Barbers also saw another part of their business taken over by the new profession of dentistry. The etching by Thomas Rowlandson on the adjoining wall pokes fun at one of dentistry’s strange techniques.

14B

Thomas Rowlandson (1757-1827)*Transplanting of Teeth etched 1787*, published 1790

Thomas Rowlandson (1757-1827) *A French dentist shewing a specimen of his artificial teeth and false palates* 26 – 26 Feb 1811

People in the 18th century definitely looked after their teeth. They brushed them and used early forms of toothpaste. It was the increasing use of sugar, particularly amongst the upper classes which affected the health of teeth at this time. As decay increased and rotten teeth were pulled out or fell out, people looked for ways to replace them. Thomas Rowlandson makes fun of one method of doing this, transplanting teeth, in this print. The tooth being

pulled from the young chimney sweep is going to go into the mouth of the wealthy woman sitting next to him, sniffing a bottle of smelling salts.

The operation involved fitting the donor tooth into the empty socket and then attaching it to the two neighbouring teeth with silk or seaweed. New adult teeth taken from children were preferred because it was easier to fit them into the gap in the gum.

Two other children are leaving the room, clutching their jaws. Although the sign on the door promises ‘Most Money Given for Live Teeth’, the girl clutches in her hand just a single small coin.

This print obviously condemns this procedure. It exploited young, poor children with an immoral practice which harmed them, all because of the vanity of rich adults.

Actually, transplanting teeth had a high failure rate, so it soon fell out of favour. People turned to false teeth, made of bone or porcelain, which became a popular alternative. Another print by Rowlandson, hanging nearby, shows a grinning dentist holding open the broad mouth of a woman to show off her perfect false teeth to a possible new client.

15. Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) *Cotton bush with Helicopis Butterfly and Tiger Moth* 1702-03

At this date there were four main fibres used to make clothing – silk, wool, linen and cotton. Two came from plants and two from animals. The painting above shows a cotton bush, and you can see the cotton fibre is in the seedheads, known as bolls, in the lower left.

Maria Sibylla Merian painted this plant in Suriname on the north-eastern coast of South America, at a time when cotton was also being grown in the Caribbean and mainland North America. The cotton was grown on huge plantations which exploited enslaved people for unpaid labour. The Atlantic slave trade saw an estimated 12 million people transported from Africa against their will, and forced to work in terrible conditions. The slave trade was driven by demand in Europe for products like sugar, tobacco and the new darling of the fashion world – cotton.

Cotton was incredibly popular. Unlike linen, cotton took colour very well – it could be printed, and it could be dyed. It was also washable.

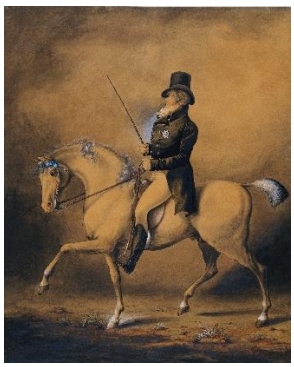
Cotton was accessible to everyone. With different levels of quality and cost it could be used to make a huge range of items, from a simple apron or handkerchief to a fine muslin from Bengal. As it became more and more popular, workers in the wool and silk industries felt threatened. They ransacked shops and even assaulted people wearing cotton, ripping the

clothes from their bodies. In response Parliament passed the Calico Act in 1721 which banned all cotton imports. But by the time then Act was scrapped over fifty years later, the home cotton industry had grown up to fill the gap in the market. New inventions like spinning machines and looms were making major changes to textile production in Britain. This was the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

To get to the next stop on this tour, go through the door to the left of this work. Thomas Rowlandson's etching, "New-Invented Elastic Breeches" is on the first wall on the left-hand side.

16. Thomas Rowlandson (1757-1827) *New Invented Elastic Breeches*. 1 – 1 Nov 1784

Richard Dighton (1795 –1880), *George Prince of Wales on Horseback*, 1804



There's a lot of pulling and pushing in this print by Thomas Rowlandson. The poster on the wall of the shop tells us that "Ramskin's Elastic Spring Breeches set close to the hips and never alter their shape." Like most fashions they do not work for everybody, but the stout customer shown here is determined to

get them on. With two assistants gripping the waistband for support, he wriggles and squeezes his way into the breeches.

Breeches were usually made of silk or wool, which did not have a lot of give. Because of this they were made quite full in the seat, so they were comfortable when sitting down. But the fashion at this time was a slim-fitting look. A fashionable gentleman had to wear breeches either made of a kind of leather – doeskin, lambskin - or of cotton, which achieved the same look. A pair of leather breeches had to be stretched to fit the body shape of the person who was going to wear them.

Not long after this print was made men started to wear longer leg-coverings which were just as slim-fitting. They were called ‘pantaloons’ and were usually tucked into boots. In Richard Dighton’s watercolour, the Prince of Wales wears them while riding. In contrast to his father George III, who was very careful when it came to spending money, the prince was a devoted follower of fashion.

He bought hundreds of items of clothing every year. He would buy in bulk, perhaps 24 waistcoats at a time, along with perfume, or swords. It is known that Prince George ordered a pair of lilac striped pantaloons at one point, but sadly there is no image of what they looked like.

Pantaloons gradually change into another type of leg covering, the trousers. Trousers had been worn by lower class people for a long time but gradually they started to be worn by the more fashionable men around town. By the 19th century they were an important part of a man’s wardrobe.

17. Attributed to British School, 18th Century, *St James's Park and the Mall c. 1745*

This picture is like a snapshot of Georgian society. People from all walks of life have flocked to St James's Park in London.

We are looking towards Whitehall Palace and can see Westminster Abbey in the distance. The painting was done around the middle of the 18th century, so we see a variety of different clothes that are being worn at the same time. There are fashionable dresses, and less fashionable dresses. Some men are wearing uniforms, others are wearing religious clothes. There are also visitors from abroad. The picture shows us a slice of London life.

It also provides examples of many of the items displayed in this exhibition. There are women's court dresses with wide skirts, elegant men's tailoring and, in the foreground, two Highland Officers in tartan. The rich visitors to the Park wear shimmering silks, rich velvets and glittering embroidery; the working people wear plainer, more hard-wearing fabrics. Sometimes we're shown

something not usually seen in a portrait. At the centre of the painting, an elegant lady in a white sacque displays the sweep of fabric hanging down from her shoulders, and there's a clear view of the wig bag worn by the man to her right. Other accessories are on display too. Walking past the avenue of trees, a woman uses her fan to shield the sight of a kissing couple and, on the far right-hand side, an open golden snuff box is being offered to a woman in blue. Almost every style and every part of society seem to be represented here.

18. Johan Joseph Zoffany (Frankfurt 1733-London1810)
***George III (1738-1820), Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) and their Six Eldest Children* 1770**

Our ideas of what 18th century fashions were like often come from television or theatre shows where the clothing is being used as costumes, and is intended to make us think of a particular period of history.

But thinking about just a narrow range of clothes worn by people to the 18th century can lead to ignoring the many different trends popular at the time. For example, the one shown in this family group of George III, Queen Charlotte and their six eldest children. The Georgians enjoyed dressing up as characters from history. They are wearing an old-fashioned style popular for portraits and at masked balls – known as 'Vandyke dress'. It was inspired by paintings by the 17th century Flemish artist Anthony van Dyck, who was Principal Painter to Charles I. In this work there is an obvious similarity between the two older boys on the left – Prince George and Prince Frederick – and Van Dyck's 1635 painting of George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, and his brother, Lord Francis Villiers.

This style of dress brought to mind a romantic vision of Britain from the past. By the mid-18th century enough time had passed for the dress of this time to

seem beautiful rather than just old-fashioned. But there may have been another reason for wearing these clothes –by wearing the kind of clothes worn at the Stuart court, the kings from the House of Hanover in Germany may also have been making a statement about their right to sit on the British throne, which came from the fact that they were descended from the Stuart King James I of England and VI of Scotland.

Portraits present a particular image chosen by the artist or the sitter, and are fixed in time. But they also contain clues about the changing history and culture of that time. Changes in styles, fabrics, colours and silhouettes often reflect big changes in society.

By the early years of the 19th century fashion designers were being inspired from all sorts of different sources. Fashions looked back at the past, at earlier years in British history and also overseas, taking ideas from different countries and regions and combining them into a range of new looks.

We've now reached the end of our tour. To find out more about works of art in the Royal Collection, please visit our website at www.rct.uk. There you can find out about future exhibitions and keep in touch by signing up to our e-Newsletter or by following us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. If you have bought your ticket directly from us, you can return to The King's Gallery, free of charge, for a year, by converting your ticket into a 1-Year Pass. Just sign the back and ask a member of staff to stamp it before you leave.

We hope you have enjoyed the exhibition.

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