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ZCZ

William Dobson: The Lost Genius of British Art

2011 marks the 400th Anniversary of the birth of the little known British artist William Dobson. A timely celebration of his life and work will commence on September 12th 2011 as the result of a collaboration between Sunday Times art critic Waldemar Januszczak, ZCZ Films and a number of prestigious art institutions across the country.

Described by antiquary and writer John Aubrey as 'the most excellent painter that England hath yet bred', Dobson was Britain's finest Baroque portraitist. He was an unusually talented native artist whose work is bound up inextricably with one of the most dramatic events in history – the English Civil War.

Born in London in 1611, Dobson became principal painter to Charles I on the death of Van Dyck in 1641. A year later, at the outbreak of the English Civil War, Dobson accompanied the King to Oxford where he painted spectacular portraits of the Royal Family and the leading Royalist supporters. Following the King's defeat by Cromwell and the Parliamentarians in 1646, Dobson returned to London where he died in poverty, aged just 35.



© Collection of the Duke of Northumberland,
Alnwick Castle

Although tragically short, Dobson's career was hugely significant as witness to one of the most tumultuous epochs in British history. He was there. He saw it. He painted it. He should not be forgotten.

On Television

Spearheading the celebration is the broadcast of Waldemar Januszczak's film *The Lost Genius of British Art: William Dobson*, on BBC4, scheduled for late September. Uncovering the fascinating life and times of the artist, the film examines over thirty Dobson masterpieces and the impressive settings in which they can be found today; from great houses and museums to castles and palaces up and down the country between London and Scotland.

Additionally, a second, shorter film will reveal Waldemar's recent research into the true identity of the sitters in Dobson's painting *An Old and a Younger Man*. This is planned for later this year.

On Foot

September 12th will also see the launch of a special Dobson Art Trail, highlighting Dobson paintings in public collections across the country.

In London, the public is invited to walk in the footsteps of Dobson and trace his life from St. Andrew Church in Holborn to his royal paintings at Windsor. Further afield, magnificent Dobson paintings are scattered across the nation in great houses and galleries. The trail encourages the public to personally seek them out and discover a piece of lost British history.

In addition, several prestigious institutions, including the National Portrait Gallery, Tate Britain, the Courtauld Gallery and the Royal Collection at Windsor, have created bespoke displays to mark this celebration.

Finally, in conjunction with the trail, Waldemar Januszczak will present a series of public lectures on Dobson, scheduled for later this year and early 2012.

Online

A website has been constructed especially for this celebration and can be found at www.williamdobson.tv.

The site goes live on September 12th 2011 and will feature information about William Dobson and the 400th Anniversary celebration, including a map locating his paintings available for public view.

You can also follow the celebration on Facebook at www.facebook.com/williamdobson.tv and on Twitter at [@William_Dobson](https://twitter.com/William_Dobson).

Institutions involved in the celebration include:

The Royal Collection
The National Portrait Gallery
Tate
The Courtauld Gallery
The Victoria and Albert Museum
The Scottish National Portrait Gallery
The National Trust
English Heritage
National Museums Liverpool
Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery
Hull Museums
University of Manchester
Grosvenor Museum and Art Gallery
The National Maritime Museum
The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
Alnwick Castle
Corsham Court
Rockingham Castle
Valence House Museum