

## Face and Place

### Portraiture and Landscape in the 18th Century

A dramatic growth in Britain's wealth during the 1700s brought about an increased demand for art and design. Hundreds of grand houses were built or improved and many were filled with impressive private collections. The prominent display of paintings and decorative arts demonstrated their owners' status and taste.

Portraiture became particularly fashionable, leading to rising numbers of 'face painters' and to an increase in the quality of their work. The ability to capture a likeness was most important but artists could also enhance a sitter's image with qualities such as prestige, wisdom or power.

New public exhibitions gave artists a shop window and the Royal Academy, founded in 1768, organised the most important annual show. Amid this developing climate of enthusiasm for art, landscape painting also began its remarkable evolution.

Landscape arose from a need to accurately record views and was first thought to be of little artistic merit. But as painters grew in confidence during the later 1700s it was treated with more creativity and seriousness, establishing a distinctive tradition in British art.