
The Visit of the Queen. Presentation of the painting by Peter Paul Rubens "Portrait of Anne of Austria"



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The stunning Portrait of Anna of Austria by Peter Paul Rubens, one of the undisputed giants of European painting, can be admired as part of the Royal Route.

Anne of Austria (1601-1666) was a Spanish princess of the House of Habsburg. At the age of 14 she married Louis XIII of France, also 14 at the time, and became the Queen of France and Navarre. Her marriage was planned from the day she was born and was to be used to forge a political alliance between Spain and France. Despite her position as the so-called "reigning queen" (*reine régnante*), for many years she remained in the shadow of the actual rulers Marie de Medici, mother of Louis XIII, and Cardinal Richelieu. It was only after their deaths (1642) and that of Louis XIII (1643) that her fate changed. She was appointed regent on behalf of the minor Louis XIV and, like her adversaries, for nearly 10 years she exercised

actual rule, together with Cardinal Mazzarini. Anne of Austria was an enthusiast of the fine arts and jewellery, which fact has been immortalised in popular culture owing to Alexandre Dumas's novel entitled **The Three Musketeers** and its numerous adaptations.

The Queen had been portrayed many times by various artists, but her most impressive portraits came from under the brush of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), one of the most prominent painters of all times, author of such works as **The Judgement of Paris** (ca. 1636) or **The Portrait of Helena Fourment in a Fur Robe** (1636-1638). Rubens received a large number of commissions and to complete them all he employed many pupils and helpers. In particular, the creation of large-format canvases such as the cycle **The History of Marie de Medici** (1622-1625) required collaboration. Co-creation of paintings was a common practice at the time, especially among highly popular artists. The master supervised the whole, painted the most important elements of the composition, made corrections and signed the works with his name. He also took part in creating replicas of portraits, painted on commission for the ruling courts. This was an extremely important task, as portraits of current rulers were displayed in numerous residences and given as gifts as a token of friendship. The portrait of Queen Anne of Austria presented at the Royal Castle is an excellent example of this practice - it is believed to have been created in Rubens' studio, with his personal participation. The closest analogy of the work is a painting from the collection of the Museo del Prado, however it is larger and differs in background detail.

The display is included in The Royal Route

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