

VANDYCK L'EUROPEO

Il viaggio di un genio
da Anversa a Genova e Londra

Genova, Palazzo Ducale
20 marzo - 19 luglio 2026

VAN DYCK THE EUROPEAN THE JOURNEY OF A GENIUS FROM ANTWERP TO GENOA AND LONDON

**The largest exhibition on the Flemish master in the last twenty-five years.
Loans from the Louvre, Prado, Uffizi, National Gallery in London, and the Kunsthistorisches
Museum in Vienna**

www.palazzoducale.genova.it

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Press Release

Opening on March 19 at the Palazzo Ducale in Genoa, *Van Dyck the European. The Journey of a Genius from Antwerp to Genoa and London* is the largest exhibition of our century dedicated to the extraordinary work of one of the most iconic artists in the history of international art, and one of the most beloved by the general public.

Curated by Anna Orlando and Katlijne Van der Stighelen, the exhibition traces the entire arc of the career of an artist of exceptional talent. The exhibition unfolds as the journey undertaken by Van Dyck from his homeland, Flanders, to the court of Charles I, King of England, through numerous travels and, above all, following a long stay in Italy lasting six years. His was a career of extraordinary success, which led him to become the most renowned portrait painter in Europe, cut short by his premature death at the age of just 42.

Van Dyck was a European painter in the literal sense of the term: at the Palazzo Ducale, works from the important Italian period between 1621 and 1627 will be displayed—years in which Genoa played a central role—alongside numerous works created during different stages of his career and travels. His artistic trajectory runs alongside the economic and political history of Europe.

Van Dyck was a genius capable of transcending centuries and engaging the tastes—both in content and technique—of different social contexts and historical periods. He succeeded in synthesizing a range of influences and sensibilities from various environments, translating them into innovative artistic formulas.

The exceptional nature of the exhibition lies in the truly extraordinary number of works by Van Dyck (60 across ten thematic sections), on loan from the most important and authoritative museums in Europe—including the Louvre in Paris, the Prado and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid, and the National Gallery in London—as well as Italian institutions such as the Uffizi Gallery, the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, the Royal Museums of Turin, and the National Gallery of Parma, in

addition to prestigious international foundations and collections such as Belgium's Phoebus Foundation and Portugal's Gaudium Magnum.

The exhibition does not follow a strict chronological order: the works, displayed across twelve rooms, are grouped by themes and areas of activity, encouraging direct comparison between Van Dyck's early style in his homeland, his Italian period, and his mature English phase. This comparison also involves works with similar subjects - for example, portraits of a Genoese lady alongside those of ladies from Antwerp, Brussels, and England - revealing how Van Dyck adapted to the differing tastes and expectations of his patrons.

The exhibition also explores Van Dyck's lesser-known sacred works, a powerful blend of theatricality, pathos, religion, and emotion. Among the highlights are *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* from the Prado, *Saint Sebastian* from the National Gallery of Edinburgh, and an extraordinary unpublished *Ecce Homo* from a private European collection. Also on display is the monumental *Crucifixion* from the church of San Michele di Pagana, exceptionally removed from its altar for this exhibition.

Greeting visitors at the start of the exhibition is one of its highlights: Van Dyck's earliest known self-portrait, painted when he was around fifteen years old, on loan from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

Among other exceptional loans are the *Equestrian Portrait of Charles V* from the Uffizi, the portrait of Alessandro, Vincenzo, and Francesco Maria Giustiniani Longo from the National Gallery in London, and *Samson and Delilah* from the Dulwich Picture Gallery.

The city of Genoa will also play a key role in welcoming visitors, with additional displays in the Museums of Strada Nuova and the National Museums of Genoa, offering itineraries across the city where Van Dyck lived and worked.

The exhibition is the result of years of research by the curators and an international group of scholars, culminating in a comprehensive catalogue published by Allemandi (Italian edition) and Hannibal Books (English edition).

Exhibition Information

VAN DYCK THE EUROPEAN. THE JOURNEY OF A GENIUS FROM ANTWERP TO GENOA AND LONDON

Genoa, Palazzo Ducale – Doge's Apartments and Chapel

March 20 – July 19, 2026

Prices

Full: €15

Reduced: €13

Over 65: €14

Under 25: €9
Ages 6–18: €6

Opening hours

Monday: 2pm–7pm
Tuesday–Sunday: 10am–7pm
Friday: open until 8pm

Catalogue

Allemandi Publisher (Italian edition)
Hannibal Books (English edition)

Exhibition Design

Giovanni Tortelli and Roberto Frassoni Associati

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The Exhibition Path

The curatorial approach by Anna Orlando and Katlijne Van der Stighelen aims to present to the general public the full span of the career of an artist of exceptional talent. The exhibition unfolds as a journey retracing, step by step, the path taken by Van Dyck from his homeland, Flanders, to the court of Charles I, King of England, through numerous travels and, above all, following a long stay in Italy that lasted six years.

The retrospective is not presented in strict chronological order: the works are not arranged in the twelve rooms according to year or place of execution, but are organized by themes and areas of his production. The works are placed side by side to invite, encourage, and facilitate direct comparison between Van Dyck's early style in his homeland, his Italian phase, and his English maturity.

Comparisons are also drawn between works with similar subjects: for example, visitors will be able to compare a Genoese lady with a lady from Antwerp or Brussels, and with an English lady—portraits created at different times and, above all, for patrons with differing tastes and sensibilities. This makes clear Van Dyck's extraordinary ability to adapt to the environments in which he worked, while also highlighting the aesthetic and thematic dialogue shaped by ever-changing patronage.

The Twelve Rooms – The Exhibition Layout

The exhibition consists of twelve rooms, preceded by an introductory space welcoming visitors with an exceptional work: the painter's earliest known self-portrait, dating from around 1614. Van Dyck depicts himself with a maturity unusual for a fifteen-year-old. This work provides the key to understanding the exhibition and immediately presents Van Dyck as an artist of unique talent. Room 2 reinforces this idea with four absolute masterpieces representing four different phases of the artist's life: *Samson and Delilah* (c. 1618–20) from the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London; *The Three Ages of Man as Vanitas* (1625–26) from Palazzo Chiericati in Vicenza; *Chronos Cutting the Wings of Cupid* (c. 1627) from the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris; and *Lady Venetia Digby as an Allegory of Prudence* (1633–34) from the Royal Palace in Milan. These works astonish with their beauty and impressive scale, allowing visitors to fully immerse themselves in Van Dyck's large canvases.

Room 3 explores Van Dyck's relationship with his master Rubens, from whom he soon distanced himself, favoring a refinement that led him to develop a new artistic language—less vibrant and exuberant than Rubens's, but more subtle and restrained.

Room 4 serves as a general introduction to Van Dyck's art, presenting works created on different supports and using various techniques: oil on panel and paper, drawings, chalk on paper, and more. Visitors enter his studio and come into contact with the artist's creative process, witnessing the genesis of works born from a constant desire for experimentation.

Room 5, the first major thematic section, explores the concept of the defense of the homeland, reflecting a Europe constantly at war and a fundamental value underpinning the societies in which Van Dyck worked. Here are imposing portraits such as the *Equestrian Portrait of Charles V* (1620) from the Uffizi, and the *Portrait of the Marquis Ambrogio Spinola* (1620–21) from the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh. Also featured are gentlemen in armor or warriors—sometimes imaginary—who embody the visual representation of a value: not to attack, but to defend and preserve. This value was so deeply rooted that even children were depicted with weapons, as seen in the magnificent *Portrait of the Giustiniani Longo Children* (1626–27) from the National Gallery in London.

Room 6 addresses the theme of the family as a foundational value of society. Through portraits of couples and families, Van Dyck conveys this concept while also interpreting the often intense desire for self-representation among the ruling classes.

This continues in Room 7, a parade of 'vain actors' immortalized by Van Dyck's brush, and in Room 8, which presents four imposing full-length portraits, one for each major period of his career. Here visitors encounter the majestic *Portrait of a Lady*, exceptionally loaned from Palazzo Odescalchi in Rome.

Room 9 offers a full immersion into Van Dyck's sacred art, perhaps the least known and least studied aspect of his work, and rarely presented in Italy on such a scale. Large paintings such as *The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* (1618–20) from the Prado, *The Capture of Christ* (c. 1620–21) from Antwerp, and *Saint Sebastian* (1620–21) from the Scottish National Gallery lead visitors into the drama of sacred storytelling.

Near the end of the exhibition, Room 11 presents an extraordinary unpublished *Ecce Homo* from a private European collection. The display invites visitors to engage with the intense emotional power that Van Dyck infused into his works. Also present is a *Madonna and Child* from the National Gallery of Parma, reflecting the importance of private devotion in everyday life at the time.

The final dramatic moment takes place in the Doge's Chapel, where the large altarpiece from the church of San Michele di Pagana is displayed. The painting, *Christ Crucified with Saints Francis and Bernard and the noble Francesco Orero* (1626), introduces visitors to the only public altarpiece Van Dyck created during his Genoese years, and one of only two such works from his entire Italian period.

Van Dyck: the life of a traveling genius

Anthony van Dyck was born in Antwerp in 1599 and trained under Rubens, quickly becoming his most talented pupil. By 1617, at just 18, he was already registered as an independent master in the Guild of Saint Luke. At 21, he was invited to the court of Charles I in England, where he stayed briefly before departing for Italy.

At 22, he obtained special permission to go to Rome, where he was meant to stay only eight months—but instead remained in Italy for over six years, much of that time in Genoa. There, he immersed himself in the cradle of Classicism and the birthplace of the Renaissance, at a time when Baroque art was emerging.

Returning to Antwerp in 1627, he found a dynamic artistic environment, but soon moved to Brussels, where he was highly appreciated by both the Habsburg court and the city authorities. Despite his fame, in 1632 he moved to London, later returning briefly to Antwerp before settling again in England.

After Rubens's death in 1640, Van Dyck returned to Antwerp, then moved to Paris in early 1641 hoping for prestigious commissions. By November of that year, seriously ill, he returned to London with his wife, Lady Mary Ruthven. Their daughter Justina was born on December 1, and Van Dyck died eight days later, on December 9, at the age of 42.

European Patronage

In Antwerp, Van Dyck worked for a wealthy, dynamic bourgeois ruling class. In Italy, he encountered the highest levels of institutional power—ambassadors, cardinals—and in Genoa, a unique aristocracy distinguished by immense wealth and financial influence, effectively acting as bankers to European rulers.

In Palermo, the Viceroy Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy commissioned his portrait. The Genoa exhibition and its catalogue shed new light on a network of collectors and art dealers, representing one of the earliest developments of the free art market. Van Dyck began producing works not for specific patrons, but for sale through intermediaries—his paintings began to travel.

In England, the situation changed completely: he became a court painter, with a large workshop of assistants and collaborators. No longer working in temporary studios or private salons, he now operated a true artistic “factory,” similar to that of his former master Rubens.

IN SEARCH OF VAN DYCK

Between the 16th and 17th centuries, during the “*Siglo de los Genoveses*”, Genoa was one of the great financial and cultural capitals of Europe. The Doria, Spinola, Balbi, Cattaneo, Giustiniani, and Imperiale families commissioned solemn and sumptuous portraits from masters such as Rubens and Van Dyck—true statements of power and prestige, now preserved in major museums around the world and, in part, still present in the city.

From the exhibition at the Palazzo Ducale, the itinerary continues throughout the city, with stops at museums that house works by Flemish masters: a widespread route including the Museums of Strada Nuova (Palazzo Bianco, Palazzo Rosso, Palazzo Tursi) and the National Museums of Genoa (Palazzo Reale, Palazzo Spinola).

A reciprocal ticket agreement is in place with the museums mentioned.

Please check the respective museum websites for updated opening hours and information.

GUIDED TOURS IN THE CITY

An itinerary to rediscover traces of Van Dyck in the city through its museums.

Every Saturday at 10:00 am, from March 21 to July 18 (excluding March 28).

Departure from the IAT Office in Via Garibaldi. Duration: 2 hours 30 minutes.

TIMELESS

A photographic exhibition at the Diocesan Museum by Danielle Van Zadelhoff, from March 27 to July 29.

Portraits combining Flemish rigor with contemporary spirituality.

EVENTS

► April 8, 2026 – 6:30 pm

Sala del Maggior Consiglio

Van Dyck the European. How an Exhibition is Created

Talk with Anna Orlando

► April 16, 2026 – 6:00 pm

Sala del Minor Consiglio

A Musical Journey between Flanders, Italy, and England in Van Dyck’s Time

Curated by Collegium Pro Musica

► Concerts as part of *La Voce e il Tempo*, 10th edition, curated by Musicaround

Admission €10 for exhibition ticket holders

May 28, 2026 – 8:45 pm

Sala del Minor Consiglio

Music for Van Dyck

A unique sound journey, a dialogue between the glorious Franco-Flemish tradition and

contemporary creativity.

21 pieces performed by Ring Around Quartet

June 30, 2026 – 8:45 pm

Sala del Minor Consiglio

Love in Arms

Lucia Cortese – soprano

Bettina Hoffmann – viola da gamba

Maria Luisa Baldassarri – harpsichord

► June 26, 2026 – 5:30 pm

Sala del Minor Consiglio

Flemish Polyphony in the Late Renaissance

Sacred motets and love madrigals in the time of Anton van Dyck

Curated by the A.M.I.S.S. Musical Association