Object reduced from actual size

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NICHOLAS DIXON (English, active c. 1660–1665, died after 1707)

Portrait of Anne Hyde, Duchess of York

c. 1662

Watercolor on vellum; rectangular, 27 x 22 cm (10⅝ x 8⅝ in.)

Signature: none

Inscription: label inside of back: Henry J. Murcott, London. Written in ink on backing: Anne Hyde, first Wife of James II, Mother of Queen Mary II, Queen Anne. From Lord Currie's collection.

Setting: later wood frame

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1940.1205

Provenance

By 1895
Philip Henry Wodehouse Currie, 1st Baron Currie (1834–1906).

1906
E. Parsons (London).

1926
Purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) from E. Parsons for £25 ($125); gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, December 30, 1940.

1940
The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Exhibitions

None.

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THOUGH KNOWLEDGE ABOUT his birth and training remain obscure, Nicholas Dixon is known to have been a favorite miniature painter of the English court at the close of the seventeenth century. He succeeded Samuel Cooper (1608/9–1672) as limner to King Charles II in 1673 and was Keeper of the King's Picture Closet, for which he was granted an irregularly paid annuity of £200. Dixon painted a substantial number of ambitiously scaled miniatures—which became increasingly uncommon among practitioners of the art form when the more constrictive support of ivory supplanted vellum in the early 1700s. Dixon often signed his work with the monogram ND, and many of his large cabinet miniatures were copies of portraits, religious scenes, and mythological paintings by old masters, thirty of which formed part of the collection of the dukes of Portland.[1] Among the characteristics of his style are ruddy flesh tones and drowsy eyes, and like the work of John Hoskins (c. 1590–1665), who may have been his teacher, Dixon favored softer modeling and diffuse lighting of his

1 Daphne Foskett, *Miniatures: Dictionary and Guide* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1987; repr., 2000), pp. 131–33.

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subjects, as opposed to the dramatic shadows employed by Cooper. Two lottery schemes—one in 1684/85 and the other in 1698—involving the exhibition of miniatures and the distribution of cash prizes proved disastrous for Dixon, who was in financial ruin by 1700 and constrained to sell a large number of works from the lottery.[2]

Anne Hyde (1637–1671), the sitter in this portrait, was around the age of twenty-four when the miniature was painted. She faces right and sits upon a dull red chair before a dressing table covered with a deep red embroidered cloth or tapestry that is fringed at the edges. A mirror and open jewel box lie on a table that is in front of a dark green curtain. The sitter has gray eyes and wears a golden brown satin décolleté dress with white ruffled undersleeves ornamented with jeweled closures. A necklace of large pearls hangs around her neck, and jeweled brooches fasten a winding rope of pearls to the bodice of her gown. Her right elbow rests on the table, and her fingertips comb through her long, wavy brown hair, which falls over her shoulders to below her waist. Her left arm extends toward her knee as she lightly holds a measure of her sash under her thumb while pointing downward with her index finger. The gracefully arranged, tapered fingers indicate Restoration court refinement.

Hyde was the daughter of Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon and a trusted advisor to Charles II. From 1654 to 1660, when the royal family was still in exile following the English Civil War (1642–51), and while the sitter was serving as maid of honor to Princess Mary of Orange, Hyde was seduced, became pregnant, and in 1660 was secretly married to Mary's brother, the Duke of York, who became King James II in 1685. Historical accounts establish Hyde as a woman of great energy and intelligence, if not beauty. In his famous memoirs, her contemporary Philibert, comte de Gramont, credited her with "a majestic air, a pretty good shape, not much beauty, a great deal of wit," and, in reference to her appetite, called her "one of the highest feeders in England."[3] Hyde gave birth to eight children, but the only two to survive infancy were the future queens Mary II of England and Scotland (1662–1694) and Anne of Great Britain (1665–1714). She died shortly after the birth of her eighth child, at the age of thirty-three, having secretly converted to Catholicism the previous year. An ink inscription on this portrait's backing reads: "Anne Hyde, first Wife of James II, Mother of Queen Mary II, Queen Anne. From Lord Currie's collection." A label affixed to the back reads: "Henry J. Murcott, London"; Murcott (active by 1864–1912) was a picture dealer, restorer, and frame-maker.

This work entered the museum's collection in 1940 with an attribution to Cooper, though experts including Leo Schidlof and Harry Wehle settled on "School of Cooper" for the 1951 Greene collection catalogue.[4] The miniature is here reattributed to Dixon on the basis of style and the probability of his copying the work of Peter Lely (1618–1680). This portrait is indeed after a well-known and frequently copied oil painting by Lely, who did not paint miniatures. The oil was executed around 1662 for King James II while he was still Duke of York. This primary version in the Royal Collection portrays Hyde in a costume and posture identical to that in the miniature but with crimson and gold drapery in place of the dressing table and mirror (fig. 1). Oliver Millar argues that Lely's work probably originated this archetype.[5] The toilet accoutrements painted by Dixon may either have been his own invention or based on a slightly later rendering of the portrait. One of many versions often attributed to Lely's circle includes in the scene a larger, hanging—rather than standing—mirror but no jewel casket (fig. 2).

2 Ibid., p. 529.

3 Anthony Hamilton, *Memoirs of Count Gramont,* ed. Allan Fea (first published 1713; London: Bickers and Son, 1906), pp. 110–11, 292.

4 See comments from Schidlof (dated 6 March 1948) and from Wehle (18 November 1949), as documented in the CMA curatorial file.

5 Oliver Millar, *The Tudor, Stuart and Early Georgian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (London: Phaidon, 1963), 1: p. 121, no. 242. Millar notes that Lely frequently painted Anne Hyde and that when he died there were ten portraits of her in his studio.

Although the high demand for his portraits, particularly after the Restoration in 1660, prompted Lely to rely on a series of stock poses from which his sitters might choose, the gestural combination of combing while pointing toward the ground is rarely found in his female portraits of this period. Hyde fingering her tresses suggests the toilet even in Lely's portrait, where the table may not be laid with the associated accoutrements, but the iconography of the upturned and pointing left hand can be read as a declamatory gesture that would not be out of place in a toilet episode. As a member of the royal family, Hyde would have been at least periodically obliged to perform semi-publicly at St. James's palace, and the formal, rhetorical gesture here transforms what could have been a private act into a public ritual. Adding the mirror and opened jewel box to contextualize the suggestive manner in which Hyde touches her hair, Dixon went further than Lely to convey what might be interpreted as the privileged intimacy of a levee.[6]

The desirability among collectors for paintings of famous "beauties" rose during the late seventeenth century in response to the success of Lely's female portraits and the numerous copies commissioned from his studio. Hyde was herself responsible for assembling the most renowned example of such a group, the "Windsor Beauties." The same trend was echoed in the collecting of miniatures by Dixon, Cooper, and Richard Gibson (c. 1615–1690), whose original portraits as well as their copies after artists like Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) and Lely were in high demand.[7] Compared to oil paintings, miniature collections of beauties involved a lesser commitment of money and space, but they were also treasured as luxury art objects. Their small scale, compact arrangement, and suitability for close inspection communicated an intimacy well matched with the temperament of such a series.

Figure 1. *Portrait of Anne Hyde, Duchess of York,* c. 1662. Peter Lely (Dutch, active England, 1618–1680). Oil on canvas; 125.7 x 102.9 cm (49½ x 40½ in.). The Royal Collection RCIN 405641. © 2011 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Figure 2. *Portrait of Anne Hyde, Duchess of York*. Circle of Peter Lely. Oil on canvas; 205.1 x 130.2 cm (80¾ x 51¼ in.). Current location unknown. From *Old Master and British Paintings, 1500–1800* (London: Sotheby's, 27 May 1987), lot 215. Image reproduced courtesy of Sotheby's.

6 For further information on the English levee, see Tita Chico, *Designing Women: The Dressing Room in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Culture* (Cranbury, NJ: Bucknell University Press, 2005), pp. 46–53.

7 Catharine MacLeod and Julia Marciari Alexander, *Painted Ladies: Women at the Court of Charles II* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2001), pp. 53–55.

Figure 3. *Portrait of Lady Ann Rich, née Cavendish and later Countess of Exeter, with her brother, Charles, and a black page,* 1668. Nicholas Dixon (signed in monogram). Watercolor on vellum; 15.9 x 19.7 cm (6¼ x 7¾ in.). Burghley House, Cambridgeshire, no. min 0018.

Another of Dixon's highly finished cabinet miniatures is his portrait of Lady Anne Rich and her brother, Charles, with a black page, at Burghley House (fig. 3).[8] The figure of the countess in this work, which is signed and dated 1668, has much in common with Lely's c. 1662 oil portrait of Hyde in regard to hairstyle, costume, orientation of the figure, and, in particular, gesture, thereby indicating the stylistic affinity between Lely and Dixon. The Burghley portrait also portrays a young female sitter in the context of a 1660s cabinet miniature and reinforces Dixon's style through the sitter's sleepy eyes, soft features, and downy hair.

A related miniature at the Wallace Collection is attributed to Gibson.[9] It shows the figure at half length, and the table and toilet

Figure 4. *Portrait of Anne Hyde, Duchess of York.* Attributed to Richard Gibson (English, c. 1615–1690), after Peter Lely (Dutch, active England, 1618–1680). Watercolor on vellum; 11.8 x 9.8 cm (4⅝ x 3⅞ in.). The Wallace Collection, London M33.

8 Roberto Valeriani, *Da un Antico Castello Inglese: Oggetti d'Arte della Collezione di Burghley House* (Milan: La Rinascente, 1994), p. 42.
9 Graham Reynolds, *Wallace Collection Catalogue of Miniatures* (London: The Trustees of the Wallace Collection, 1980), p. 55, no. 20.

accoutrements of the Dixon version are omitted (fig. 4). Here, Hyde's left eye is narrower than the right—a quality less marked in Dixon's portrait.

A further reduced and simplified version by Gibson formed part of the Merchiston collection sold at Bonhams, Knightsbridge, in 2009 (fig. 5).[10] Stephen Lloyd dates this miniature to c. 1662, which emphasizes the strong market for miniature copies of Lely's portrait shortly after it was completed. Compared to both the Cleveland Dixon and the version at the Wallace Collection, this work is more youthful and doll-like, omitting features of the original Lely, such as Hyde's fleshy jaw line and slightly ruddy complexion.

Though they were all painted around 1662, Cleveland's miniature by Dixon is more faithful to the Lely original than either work attributed to Gibson, as comparison of the faces demonstrates (fig. 6). Only Dixon duplicated the fleshiness of the sitter's face and her heavily lidded eyes, which the artist made even narrower. The result is that the Dixon miniature is more evocative of the Restoration style of Lely's painting, in spite of the fact that Gibson and Lely were of the same generation.[11] CORY KORKOW

Figure 5. *Portrait of Anne Hyde, Duchess of York,* c. 1662. Richard Gibson (English, c. 1615–1690). Watercolor on vellum; h. 5.8 cm (2¼ in.). From *The Merchiston Collection of Fine Portrait Miniatures* (Knightsbridge, London: Bonhams, 25 November 2009), lot 5. Current location unknown.

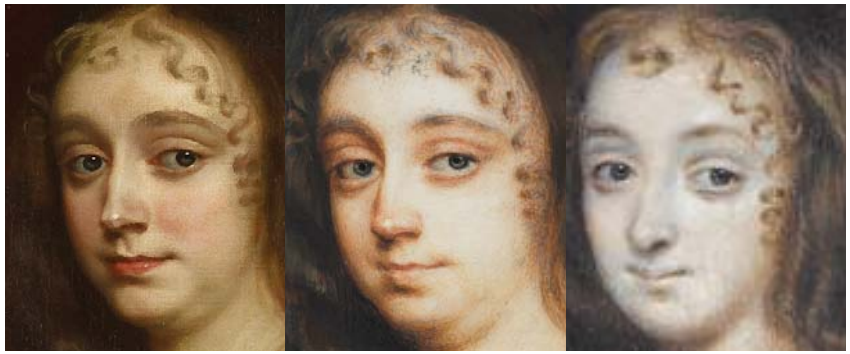

Figure 6. Details of, from left to right, the Royal Collection Lely painting, the Cleveland Dixon miniature, and the Merchiston Gibson miniature.

10 Stephen Lloyd, *Portrait Miniatures from the Merchiston Collection* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2005), p. 20.
11 MacLeod and Alexander, *Painted Ladies,* pp. 55–56, 173.