



Inside: Gainsborough's House

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- A richly pictorial introduction to the birthplace of 18th-century artist Thomas Gainsborough, now both a museum and a dynamic new exhibition space

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88), English painter of portraits, landscapes and lyrical conversation pieces, is both one of the greatest and one of the most individual geniuses in British art. Born a merchant's son in the prosperous market town of Sudbury, Suffolk, Gainsborough's early signs of artistic brilliance were enabled by a family legacy.

Gainsborough's birthplace and childhood home, a handsome Georgian townhouse, is indisputably a national asset. Saved from possible destruction in 1958 by a widely supported national campaign, it was opened to the public in 1961.

Inside: Gainsborough's House explores and illuminates the stories of both artist and house, outlining Gainsborough's meteoric rise from weaver's son to high society artist and highlighting his enormous influence on his contemporaries and succeeding generations of artists. The story of the house is more erratic; a private residence until the 1920s, it was then used variously as a shop, a café and a hotel accommodating US airmen during World War II. Its subsequent reimagining as a museum, followed by an even more ambitious transformation completed in 2022, creating state-of-the-art exhibition spaces, combine to give an intriguing insight into evolving museum practice and the institutional challenges facing today's museums.