



The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England (The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art)

Kate Retford

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This book is the first to explore English family portraiture in the 18th century, a varied category ranging from small-scale conversation pieces to grandiose, full-length images. Kate Retford probes this much-loved genre to trace the values and meanings behind these compositions.

While early images by artists such as Arthur Devis depicted sitters stiffly posed, later in the century scenes of affection and intimacy were created by portraitists like Thomas Gainsborough and Joshua Reynolds. In the country-house collections, portraits first emphasized ancestry and inherited virtue, but later emphasized the domestic merits of the family. *The Art of Domestic Life* contributes a wealth of visual evidence to the history of the family. It offers important insights into both the innovations and traditions in family portraiture of this period, drawing on in-depth research into paintings, the lives of the sitters depicted, and the domestic spaces in which portraits were hung.

Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art

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