

CLASSICAL MYTHS

THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

The subject of these paintings is the events that started one of the most famous legendary conflicts, the Trojan War. The gods were at a party celebrating a wedding, when suddenly a golden apple was thrown into their midst. It was thrown by the goddess of Discord, who was angered by not being invited. The apple bore the words 'For the Fairest', and was deliberately placed to start an argument. Unable to decide who was the fairest, three powerful goddesses approached Paris, the son of King Priam of Troy.

The choice was between Juno (Hera), who was a powerful goddess and wife to Jupiter, king of the gods; Minerva (Athena), who was goddess of war and wisdom; and, finally, Venus (Aphrodite), who was the goddess of love and beauty. Juno promised Paris land and riches while Minerva promised him victory in battle, but Venus promised him love. Paris chose Venus – with terrible consequences. Specifically, Venus offered marriage to the most beautiful woman in the world. This was Helen of Sparta, with whom Paris then eloped although she was already married to Menelaus, king of Sparta. Thus began the devastating Trojan War which lasted ten years, ending only with the destruction of Paris's native Troy and his death.

KEY WORKS



Anthony van Dyck
Paris
1628

François Boucher
The Judgment of Paris
1754

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TITLE The Judgment of Paris
DATE 1754
SIZE 164 x 76.6 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST François Boucher
DATES 1703-1770
PLACE France



TITLE Paris
DATE 1628
SIZE 96 x 84 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST Anthony van Dyck
DATES 1599-1641
PLACE The Netherlands

THE PAINTINGS

In Boucher's painting, Juno, at the top, holds a golden sceptre to show her rank and has two peacocks sitting in the clouds by her as these were her special emblems. Minerva, just below her, has her helmet topped with scarlet feathers. Venus has Cupid with her and is being crowned with a garland of roses to show that she has won the contest. Paris holds out the golden apple to her.

Van Dyck chooses to focus on the prince alone at the moment of decision. Paris looks thoughtful, pondering his choice as he holds the apple in one hand.

THE ARTISTS

François Boucher

Boucher was one of the most successful artists in 18th-century France. His painting was typical of the Rococo style in all its prettiness, lightness of tone and pastel colours.

Sir Anthony van Dyck

Van Dyck was born in Antwerp and became an assistant to the painter Rubens while still a teenager. He travelled widely in Italy but also spent nine years in England where he became a favourite painter of Charles I and painted portraits of the royal family and many of the English nobility. The king awarded him a knighthood and his work influenced many of the later English portrait artists.

DISCUSS



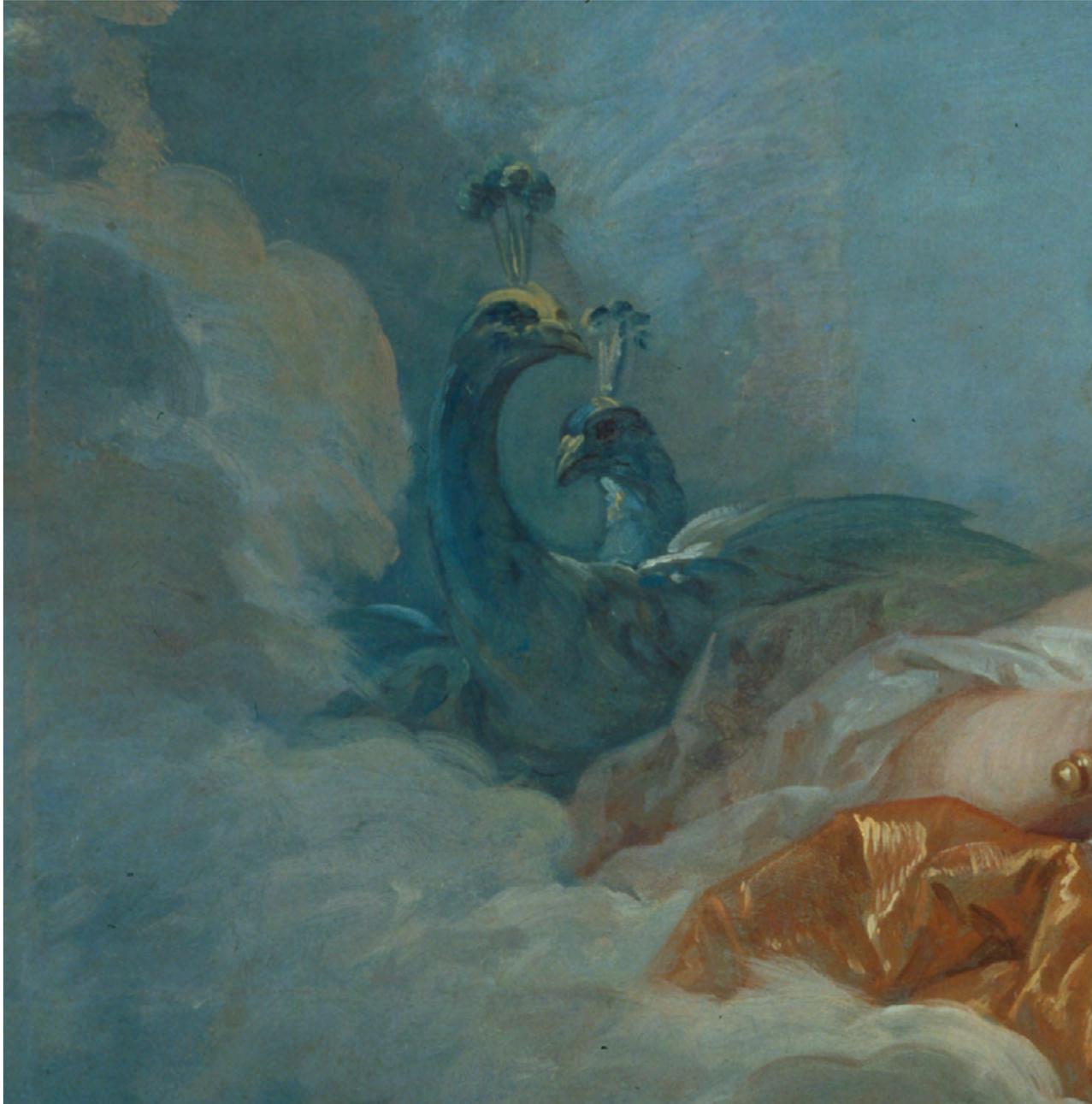
- Why do you think that Paris chose Venus to win the golden apple?
- Do you think it was brave of Paris to risk upsetting the other goddesses? Did he have a choice?
- What might the peacocks and helmet tell us about Juno and Minerva?

ACTIVITIES



- Find out more about the story of the Trojan War. What are the consequences of Paris's choice?
- Hold a class debate about Paris's options with groups preparing different arguments - which would you vote for and why?
- Explore the idea of attributes - things that helps us recognise characters in stories and art. Create a self-portrait with a chosen attribute - it could be something to wear, or a favourite object or animal.

THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS



IN DETAIL



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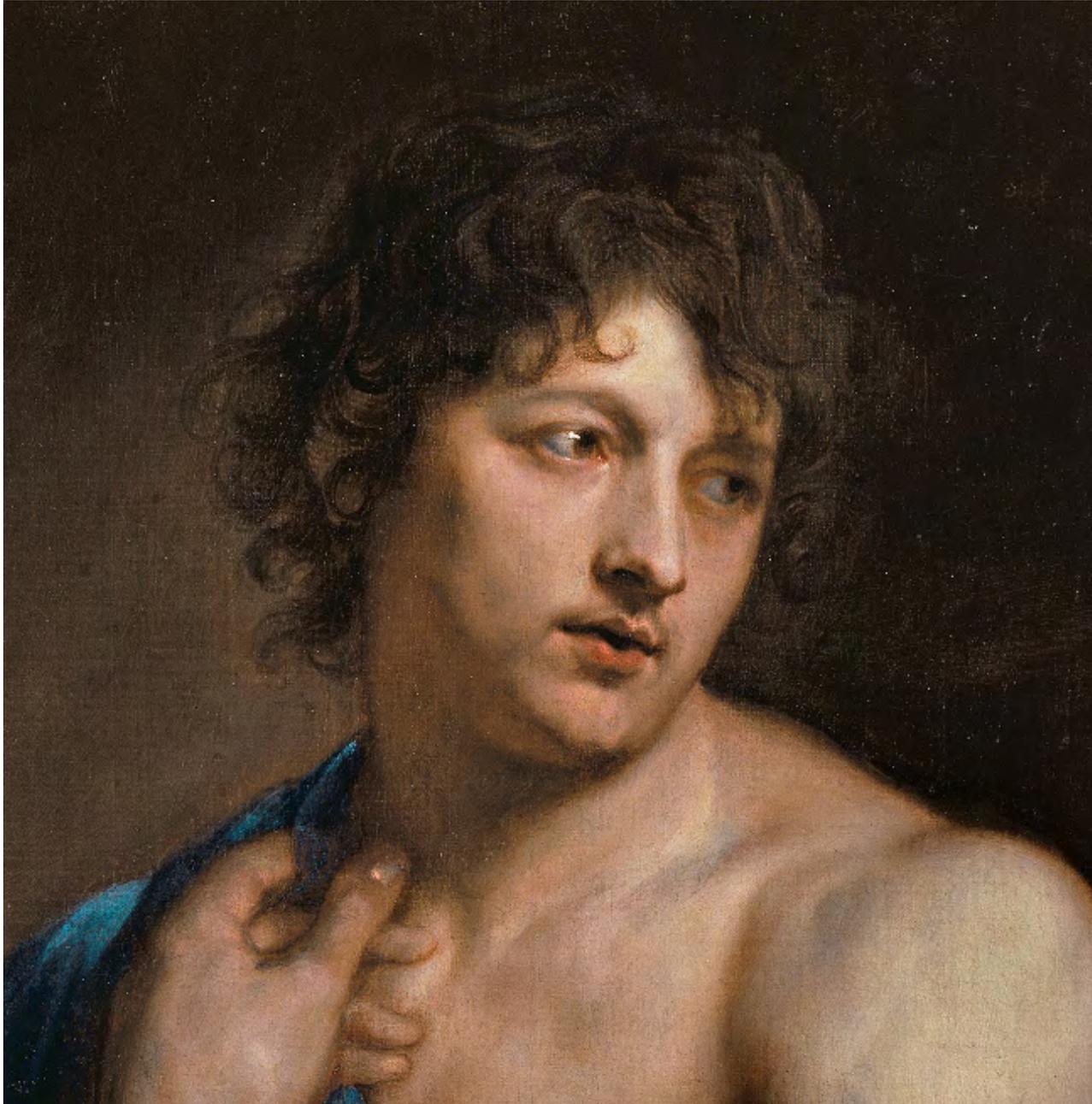


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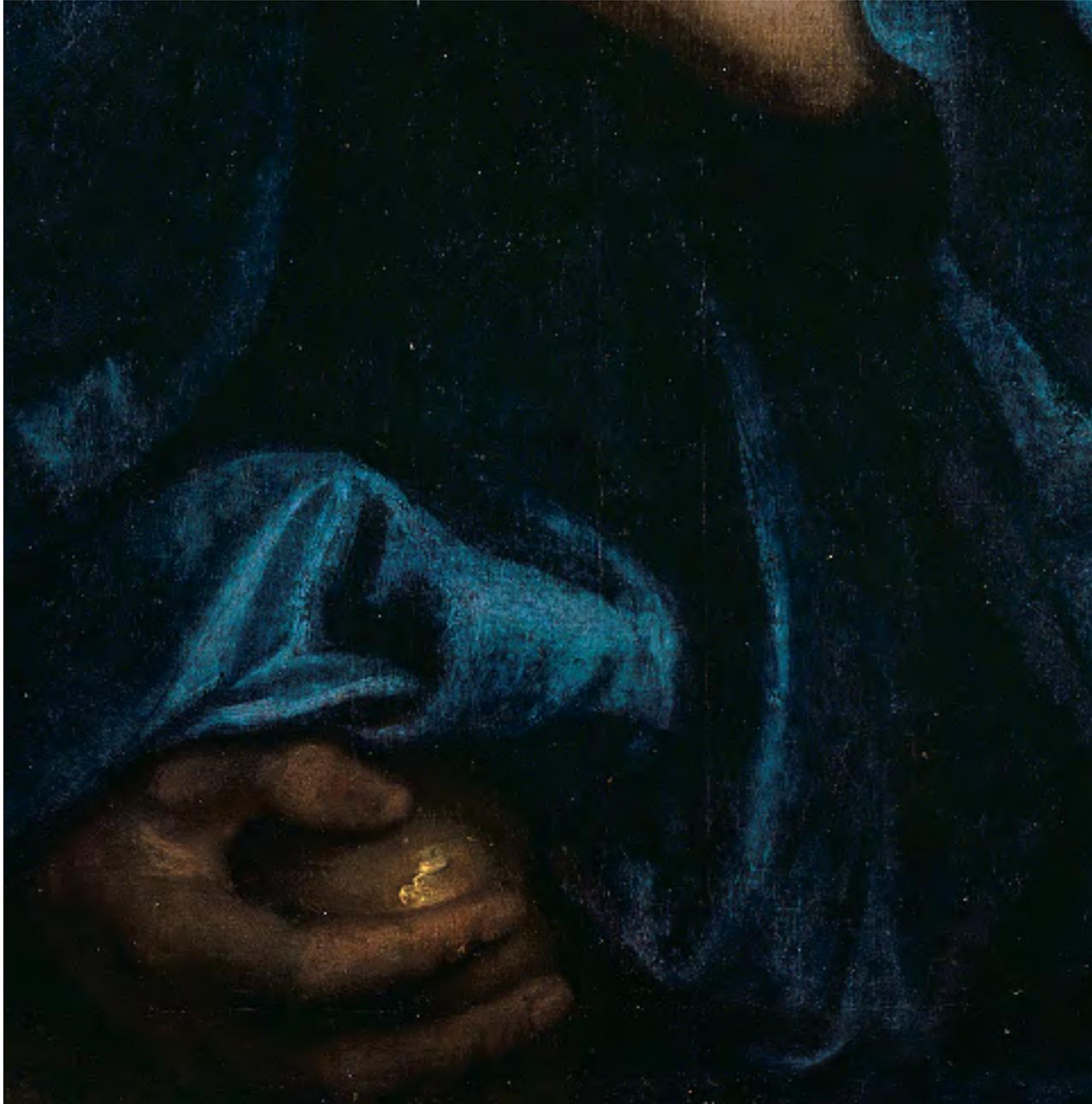
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