

For immediate release

Unprecedented loans from the National Portrait Gallery, London, chronicle 500 years of the British monarchy at the MFAH

The exhibition Tudors to Windsors: British Royal Portraits from Holbein to Warhol sheds new light on changing ideas of monarchy and nationhood in Britain, from Hans Holbein, Sir Peter Lely, and Sir Joshua Reynolds to Cecil Beaton, Andy Warhol, and Annie Leibovitz

HOUSTON—September 2018—A major partnership between the National Portrait Gallery, London, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, brings a sweeping survey of British royal portraiture to Houston next month. *Tudors to Windsors: British Royal Portraits from Holbein to Warhol* showcases masterworks of painting, sculpture, and photography dating from the first monarch of the House of Tudor, Henry VII, to Elizabeth II, the reigning queen of the United Kingdom. Through some 150 objects—most never before seen outside of England—the survey showcases the extraordinary history and fascinating figures of five centuries of British royalty. The exhibition will be on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), from **October 7, 2018, to January 27, 2019.**



Tudors to Windsors highlights depictions of monarchy as a means to explore a changing nation throughout its history, from masterworks by Hans Holbein, Sir Peter Lely, and Sir Joshua Reynolds to the modern icons Cecil Beaton, Andy Warhol, and Annie Leibovitz. The exhibition draws from the unparalleled collection of the National Portrait Gallery, where royal portraits have been at the center of its collection since its founding during the reign of Queen Victoria in 1856. The MFAH has secured additional loans from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Palazzo Barberini, Rome; the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid; as well as the Snowdon Archive and National Gallery, London. In Houston, the exhibition is curated by Dr. Louise Stewart, Curator of Sixteenth-century to Contemporary Collections at the National Portrait Gallery, London, and co-curated by David Bomford, Chair, Department of Conservation, and Audrey Jones Beck Curator, Department of European Art, MFAH.

It is the first time that the National Portrait Gallery has allowed such a large number of its greatest treasures to travel, providing an unparalleled overview of a cavalcade of kings, queens, princes, and princesses. “It is a privilege to partner with the National Portrait Gallery in organizing this landmark exhibition,” commented Gary Tinterow, MFAH director. “Their unique collection provides visitors an incomparable experience of Britain’s royal historical narrative and the opportunity to view these legendary personalities face-to-face.”

Dr. Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery, London, said, “Royal portraits have long held a special place in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London. Drawn almost entirely from the Gallery’s collections, this unprecedented exhibition provides visitors to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, with the opportunity to encounter some of history’s most fascinating personalities as well as many of the most accomplished portraits produced in the last 500 years. I am delighted that this exhibition will tour internationally, bringing the Gallery’s collections to new audiences.”

Exhibition Overview

Tudors to Windsors explores four royal dynasties: the Tudors (1485–1603), the Stuarts (1603–1714), the Hanoverians (1714–1901), and the present-day House of Windsor. Recurring historical patterns of war, social and religious upheaval, economic and industrial progress and decline, and changing attitudes toward monarchy shape the fascinating backstory of these phenomenal portraits, which were primarily intended to project permanence, stability, serene power, and in modern times, domestic tranquility. Highlights include:



The five monarchs of the House of Tudor ruled the kingdom of England for more than a century during a period defined by the unrest of the English Reformation. Hans Holbein the Younger’s monumental portrait of Henry VIII shows the infamous ruler without any of the standard royal accoutrements to convey his power through presence alone. This portrait, from the Palazzo Barberini collection, is the greatest surviving painting of Henry VIII by Holbein.

Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII, was famously portrayed by some of the greatest artists of her time. The famous “Ditchley Portrait” (c. 1592) by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger has never before been seen in the U.S. “The Virgin Queen” stands on a map of England, with her foot planted on the estate of Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire, for which the painting was commissioned. The work conveys the almost supernatural power of the queen, who is presented as a personification of England itself. It is one of the most historically important paintings in the National Portrait Gallery’s collection.



Following Elizabeth I’s death in 1603, the Stuart dynasty presided over a turbulent Britain for the next century, an era defined by plague, the Great Fire of London, and war. Two important portraits in the exhibition are by Robert Peake the Elder, an artist little known today. They depict two of the most tragic Stuarts—the siblings Henry, Prince of Wales, and Princess Elizabeth. Henry died at 18 from typhoid fever. Elizabeth married Frederick, Elector Palatine and King of Bohemia, only to be ousted from the throne to spend the rest of her

life in exile, where she worked to keep her plight and that of her children in the minds of her allies, and came to symbolize militant Protestantism as the tragic “Winter Queen.”

The six monarchs of the House of Hanover—bookended by King George I and Queen Victoria—reigned through eras buoyed by the Empire’s vast expansion, advanced by the innovations of the Industrial Revolution and ultimately propelled toward world war by the growing political and social unrest of an increasingly fragile Europe. A highlight of this section are two portraits by Allan Ramsay: King George III, who lost the American colonies, and his Queen Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.



The House of Windsor has ruled over a period of unprecedented change through two world wars and the emergence of a global audience for the royal family. Works on view in this section trace the history of the Windsors through the 20th and 21st centuries, in particular through the medium of photography, from Lord Snowdon’s portraits of his wife Princess Margaret in the 1960s, to Mario Testino’s intimate shots of Diana in the 1990s and Annie Leibovitz’s recent photo series of Queen Elizabeth II. Under the house of Windsor, a new generation of British royals have become international celebrities and ambassadors for charities worldwide.

Publication

This exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue published by the National Portrait Gallery, London.

About the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Established in 1900, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is among the 10 largest art museums in the United States, with an encyclopedic collection of nearly 70,000 works dating from antiquity to the present. The main campus comprises the Audrey Jones Beck Building, designed by Rafael Moneo and opened in 2000; the Caroline Wiess Law Building, originally designed by William Ward Watkin, with extensions by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe completed in 1958 and 1974; the Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, designed by Isamu Noguchi and opened in 1986; the Glassell School of Art, designed by Steven Holl Architects and opened in 2018; and The Brown Foundation, Inc. Plaza, designed by Deborah Nevins & Associates, Inc, and opened in 2018. Additional spaces include a repertory cinema, two libraries, public archives, and facilities for conservation and storage. Nearby, two house museums—Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, and Rienzi—present American and European decorative arts. The MFAH is also home to the International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA), a leading research institute for 20th-century Latin American and Latino art. mfah.org

About the National Portrait Gallery, London

The National Portrait Gallery was founded in 1856 to encourage through portraiture the appreciation and understanding of the people who have made and are making British history and culture. Today it promotes engagement with portraiture in all media to a wide-ranging public by conserving, growing, and sharing the world's largest collection of portraits. With over 1,000 portraits on display, across three floors, from Elizabeth I to David Beckham, the Gallery has something for everyone. Artists featured range from Holbein to Hockney, and the collection includes work across all media, from painting and sculpture to photography and video. As well as the permanent displays, the Gallery has a diverse and ever-changing program of exhibitions and events that promote an understanding and appreciation of portraiture in all forms. npg.org.uk

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Organization & Funding

This exhibition is organized by the National Portrait Gallery, London, in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

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Media Contacts

Mary Haus, head of marketing & communications

mhaus@mfah.org | 713.639.7712

Sarah Hobson, publicist

shobson@mfah.org | 713.800.5345

Illustrations

1. Cecil Beaton, *Queen Elizabeth II*, 2 June 1953, semi-matte cibachrome print, National Portrait Gallery, London. © Cecil Beaton / Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
2. Hans Holbein the Younger, *Portrait of Henry VIII*, 1540, oil on wood, Palazzo Barberini, Rome.
3. Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Queen Elizabeth I* (“*The Ditchley Portrait*”), c. 1592, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London. © National Portrait Gallery, London
4. Robert Peake the Elder, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, c. 1610, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London. © National Portrait Gallery, London
5. Robert Peake the Elder, *Princess Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia and Electress Palatine*, c. 1610, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London. © National Portrait Gallery, London
6. After Allan Ramsay, *King George III*, 1761–62, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London. © National Portrait Gallery, London
7. After Allan Ramsay, *Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz*, 1761–62, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London. © National Portrait Gallery, London
8. Terence Donovan, *Diana, Princess of Wales*, 1990, bromide print, the National Portrait Gallery, London, given by the photographer’s widow, Diana Donovan, 1998, NPG P716 (11). Photograph Terence Donovan © Terence Donovan Archive