



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**3 FEBRUARY 2020**

**TATE BRITAIN**

## **BRITISH BAROQUE: POWER AND ILLUSION**

**4 February - 19 April 2020**

**Supported by White & Case, with additional support from the Baroque Exhibition Supporters Circle, Tate Americas Foundation, Tate International Council and Tate Patrons**  
**Open daily 10.00 – 18.00**  
**For public information call +44(0)20 7887 8888, visit [tate.org.uk](http://tate.org.uk) or follow @Tate**

*British Baroque: Power and Illusion* is the first ever exhibition to focus on baroque culture in Britain. From the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the death of Queen Anne in 1714, the exhibition explores the rich connections between art and power in this often-overlooked era. The show includes many new discoveries and works displayed in public for the first time, many on loan from the stately homes for which they were originally made.

The baroque is usually associated with the pomp and glory of European courts, epitomised by that of Louis XIV, but baroque visual culture also thrived in Britain under very different circumstances. From the royal court's heyday as the brilliant epicentre of the nation's cultural life, to the dramatic shift in power that saw the dominance of party politics, this exhibition shows how magnificence was used to express status and influence. As well as outstanding paintings by the leading artists of the day, including Sir Peter Lely, Sir Godfrey Kneller and Sir James Thornhill, the show also uncovers pivotal works by lesser known names.

*British Baroque* begins by exploring art's role in the construction of a renewed vision of monarchy, including portraits of Charles II and idealised representations of his power. It looks at the splendour, colour and vivacity of the Restoration court, as well as the critiques of its tone and morals. Portraits by Lely, including *Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland with her son, as the Virgin and Child* 1664, were used to illustrate the important position held by royal mistresses while works by Jacob Huysmans, such as *Catherine of Braganza* c.1662-4, shaped the independent visual identity of the Queen consort.

The visual and devotional differences between Protestant and Catholic worship are examined in the religious art of the period. Emotionally charged altarpieces from the contentious Catholic chapels of Mary of Modena and James II are on show, as well as beautiful carvings by Grinling Gibbons and Thornhill's designs for the painted dome of St Paul's Cathedral. Another theme explored is the wonder and artifice of still life and perspective *trompe l'oeil*, including works by Samuel van Hoogstraten collected by members of the Royal Society, Chatsworth's famous violin painted as if

hanging on the back of a door, and the hyper-real flower paintings of Simon Verelst which looked so real that they fooled the diarist Samuel Pepys.

*The profound visual impact and drama of baroque architecture is represented with works by the great architects of the age: Wren, Hawksmoor and Vanbrugh. Architectural designs, lavish prints and wooden models relating to the significant buildings of the age, such as St Paul's Cathedral, Hampton Court Palace and Blenheim Palace, are shown alongside vast painted birds-eye views of estates. As well as architecture, the exhibition looks at the awe-inspiring illusion of painted baroque interiors. Mythological mural paintings, which frequently carried contemporary political messages, were designed to overwhelm spectators and impress upon them the power, taste and leadership of their owners.*

War and politics dominated the reigns of William III and Anne. The exhibition includes heroic equestrian portraiture, panoramic battle scenes and accompanying propaganda. Victories such as Blenheim celebrated individuals such as the Duke of Marlborough, but they also embodied the might of the nation on a European stage. The show concludes with the dignified grandeur of portraiture made in the last two decades of the Stuart period, when party politics offered an alternative avenue to power. As well as imposing portraits of courtiers and aristocrats, the new political elite is seen in Kneller's depiction of the Whig Kit-Cat Club and John James Baker's enormous group portrait *The Whig Junto 1710*.

*British Baroque: Power and Illusion* is curated by Tabitha Barber, Curator, British Art 1550-1750, Tate Britain, with David Taylor, Curator of Pictures and Sculpture, National Trust, and Tim Batchelor, Assistant Curator, British Art 1550-1750, Tate Britain. It is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue and a programme of talks and events in the gallery.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### WHITE & CASE

White & Case is a leading global law firm with lawyers in 44 offices across 30 countries. Among the first US-based law firms to establish a truly global presence, White & Case provides counsel and representation in virtually every area of law that affects cross-border business. Clients value both the breadth of the firm's global network and the depth of its US, English and local law capabilities in every region and rely on White & Case for their complex cross-border transactions, as well as their representation in arbitration and litigation proceedings.

## RELATED EVENTS

### POWER AND ILLUSION: VOGUING WORKSHOP

28 February, 18.30 – 20.30, Upper Galleries

In collaboration with Diva Miyake-Mugler

Learn about the history of ballroom and develop your voguing skills in this practical workshop. Framed by the opulent portraiture of the Baroque period, voguing extraordinaire Diva Miyake-Mugler responds to the exhibition's themes of power and illusion through discussion and movement, opening up new perspectives on this history through the lens of another. This event forms part of LGBT History Month at Tate, and particularly welcomes participation from LGBTQI and QTPOC communities.

### CURATOR'S TOUR: BRITISH BAROQUE

13 March 2020, 18.30-20.30, Upper Galleries

Curator Tabitha Barber leads a tour to discover the stories behind the works in the exhibition and the persuasive messages they convey that supported the power and influence of leading figures of the day.

**CLASSICAL REMIX PRESENTS: BENJAMIN TASSIE**

20 March 2020, 19.30 – 21.00, Upper Galleries

In collaboration with Benjamin Tassie

An experimental evening of electronic music inspired by the Baroque. This hour-long seated performance will be followed by a private view of the exhibition.

**CONSERVATION TOUR: BRITISH BAROQUE**

27 March 2020, 18.30-20.30, Upper Galleries

Join Tate frames conservator Adrian Moore for this unique opportunity to go behind-the-scenes and learn about Tate's approach to frame conservation in the British Baroque: Power and Illusion exhibition. Learn how Tate's curatorial and conservation teams work together to negotiate considerations of historical accuracy when preparing artworks for display.

**MEDIA RELATIONS FOR EUROPE:**

**FOUCHARD  
FILIPPI**  
COMMUNICATIONS

**FOUCHARD FILIPPI COMMUNICATIONS**

[info@fouchardfilippi.com](mailto:info@fouchardfilippi.com)

+ 33 1 53 28 87 53 / + 33 6 60 21 11 94

[www.fouchardfilippi.com](http://www.fouchardfilippi.com)