

# Understanding British Portraits

## **Understanding British Portraits Annual Seminar**

**Wednesday 25 November 2015, 10.00 — 17.10 National Portrait Gallery**

**Co-chaired by Jennifer Scott, Director, The Holburne Museum, and Ian Dejardin, Director, Dulwich Picture Gallery**

### **Programme**

10.00—10.40 Registration and refreshments in the Print Sales Gallery

10.40—10.50 **Welcome from Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery**

10.50-10.55 **Welcome from morning chairperson Jennifer Scott**

### **New Interpretations**

10.55—11.20 **Wendy Hitchmough, Head of Historic Buildings & Research, Historic Royal Palaces**  
***'Setting' the Stuart Dynasty***

This paper will address the significance of 'context' in the display of portraits. It will consider the representation of Classical architecture in a group of early Stuart portraits of Inigo Jones's royal and aristocratic patrons. It will focus on cultural synthesis and the ways in which state portraits, newly formed 'classical collections', and the Classical architecture that was designed to house them, functioned experientially, together with the performances, ceremonies and rituals of the courts of James I, his consort Queen Anna of Denmark, and Charles, Prince of Wales.

11.20—11.45 **Jordan Mearns, PhD Candidate, The University of Edinburgh**  
***Behind the Curtain and Under the Kilt: The Earl of Bute, his Endowment and the Full-Length (of it)***

The paper will explore the dialogue between visual satire and formal portraiture, focusing on the significance of the elite male body in both genres. The spectacular display of shapely male legs showcased in Allan Ramsay's full-length portrait of the Earl of Bute will be counterpointed with the sustained fascination with Bute's allegedly sizable endowment in visual satire. In concert, these differing preoccupations with Bute's physicality offer a surprising insight into Anglo-Scottish relations and the state of 'Britishness' in the 1760s.

11.45—12.10 **Sarah Grant, Curator of Prints, Victoria & Albert Museum; DPhil candidate, University of Oxford**

***English portraits of the princesse de Lamballe, an Anglophile princess at the court of Marie-Antoinette***

This paper introduces the English portraits and anglophile interests of the senior French courtier, the princesse de Lamballe (1749-1792), a close and long-standing confidante to Marie-Antoinette. New research is presented on the sympathetic elite community that sprang up between the travelling members of the English 'Ton' and key members of the French court during the late eighteenth century, the French queen's own anglophile inclinations, and perceptible correlations in the portraits both groups commissioned.

12.10—12.40 **Panel discussion with the morning's speakers chaired by Jennifer Scott**

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12.40—14.00 **Lunch** in the Education Studio (provided for all), and time to visit the galleries.

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14.00-14.05 **Welcome from afternoon chairperson Ian Dejardin**

### **Identity and Self-fashioning**

14.05—14.30 **Samantha Wilson, Curatorial Trainee, The Charleston Trust**

#### ***The Maternal Paradox: The Private Portraiture of Vanessa Bell***

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vanessa Bell's painting and decorative work placed her in the vanguard of British modernism yet she feared succumbing to the 'usual female fate' of not being taken seriously as an artist. Today she is often examined as a member of a group, or as one half of a couple. This paper considers the uneasy relationship between the eye of the mother and that of the artist and how the emotional attachment of one can cause conflict with the practical detachment of the other.

14.30—14.55 **Dr Pauline Rose, Professor of Art History, BA (Hons) Fine Art, The Arts University Bournemouth**

#### ***Kathleen Scott (1878–1947): A Portrait of the Sculptor and her Work***

Scott's sculpted busts of writers, politicians and royalty combine the veracity of the photographic portrait with a Rodinesque virtuosity. This was at a time when many of Britain's leading male sculptors also worked with the portrait bust: however as a genre it has been overlooked in accounts of early C20th British art history. This paper will also examine how illustrated reviews of Scott essentially 'domesticated' both her and her work, and how that reflected the general displacement of women artists within the writing of art history.

14.55—15.20 **Dr. Alice Correia, Researcher, University of Salford/ Mid-Career Fellow, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art**

#### ***Making Myself Visible: Diasporic Culture and Representations of Blackness in the 1980s.***

This paper will consider the ways in which Black and Asian artists engaged with portraiture during the 1980s and early '90s. It will assess the extent to which Black (self) portraits can be classified as politically motivated interventions into a white hegemonic visual discourse.

15.20—15.50 **Refreshments** in the Education Studio

### **Collections and audiences**

15.50—16.15 **Bronwen Colquhoun, Assistant Curator, Photographs; Janet Browne, Programme Manager for Black Heritage and Culture; Lucy White - Learning Department Co-ordinator, all Victoria and Albert Museum, London**

#### ***Staying Power: Photographs of Black British Experience 1950s-1990s***

*Staying Power: Photographs of Black British Experience 1950s-1990s* was a project undertaken with Black Cultural Archives (BCA) to increase the number of black British photographers and images of black Britain in the V&A collection. To complement the photographs, BCA collected oral histories from a range of subjects including the photographers themselves, their relatives, and the people depicted in the images. This paper looks at how these photographs and oral histories have aided our understanding of black British experience in the mid- to late-twentieth century. It highlights the various components of the Staying Power project, from the early research and selection phases through to the programming of learning activities, exhibitions and a two-day conference.

16.15—16.40 **Amina Wright, Senior Curator, and Louise Campion, Learning and Community Engagement Officer, both Holburne Museum, Bath**

#### ***From the Inside-Out: 18th-century portraits meet 21st-century science***

This paper will document a mental health and well-being outreach project which brought art and science together in order to reinterpret the Holburne Museum's 18th-century portraits in the light of 21st century research into the brain.

16.40—17.10 **Panel discussion with the afternoon's speakers chaired by Ian Dejardin**

17.10 **Close**



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