PORTRAITURE
POWER AND ROYALTY

Royal portraiture is centuries old and these images come in a variety of forms. Official state portraits allowed monarchs to control their image and project how they wished to be seen; they can be unique works of art which are large in scale, but official imagery can also be seen more widely, for example on engravings or on a smaller scale, circulated on money and coins.

Monarchs often had a close relationship with the most talented artists of the day in order to carefully craft and manage their image and that of the wider royal family. However many popular portraits of royalty also exist, the production of which was outside of their control. These portraits give us an alternative view and provide an insight into how the monarchs were seen by the wider public.

KEY WORKS

Diego Velázquez, *Prince Baltasar Carlos in Silver,* 1633

Antoine Coysevox, *Louis XIV, c.* 1699

Thomas Lawrence, *George IV* , 1822

Thomas Sully, *Queen Victoria,* 1838

PRINCE BALTASAR CARLOS IN SILVER

TITLE	Prince Baltasar Carlos in Silver
DATE	1633
SIZE	117.8 x 95.9 cm
MATERIALS	Oil on canvas

ARTIST	Diego Velázquez
DATES	1599–1660
PLACE	Spain

PRINCE BALTASAR CARLOS IN SILVER

IN DETAIL

PRINCE BALTASAR CARLOS IN SILVER

IN DETAIL

PRINCE BALTASAR CARLOS IN SILVER

THE PORTRAIT

A young child with ruffled hair and a cherubic face framed with short curls is the sitter of this portrait. The artist, Velázquez, has captured the fresh-faced innocence of a three-year-old child. The child has, however, been posed and dressed in a contrastingly formal way, unchildlike and unnatural for a toddler.

At first sight, looking at the costume of this child, we might be forgiven for thinking this is a girl. However, the gown they are wearing is an item typically worn by young boys, until they were aged about eight, when they would start to wear trousers or 'breeches'. This is a portrait of Prince Baltasar Carlos, the future king of Spain, leader of the Spanish armies, the greatest power in the world at that time.

The luxurious shimmering silver fabrics indicate his status as a child prince. The young boy, who was intended to grow up to command the armies, is adorned with many items that an adult would wear in battle. The prince wears a red sash of a captain general, in his right hand he holds a baton of command which generals hold as they go into battle, and his other hand is placed on the top of his sword. Around his throat, underneath his lace collar, he wears a piece of armour, called a gorget, used to protect the throat in battle.

In placing his feathered hat on the cushion to his right, the artist has ensured we are able to see the prince's fresh young face conveying a spirit of childhood, alongside the formal etiquette that his position in the royal household requires.

The prince unfortunately died of a fever aged fifteen. When looking back with hindsight at the image today, we read it in a different way from its original intent. Instead of the bright potential of a future military strategist we read the image with sadness, a portrait of unrealised future potential.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

Prince Baltasar Carlos (1629–1646) was the son of Philip IV of Spain by his first wife, Queen Isabel de Bourbon. He was the heir to the Spanish throne, one of the world's greatest powers.

He was to control and maintain power across the Spanish territories, which included South America, the Netherlands and Italy. He was idolised by his parents but died of fever at the age of fifteen in 1646.

PRINCE BALTASAR CARLOS IN SILVER

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Diego Velázquez (1599–1660) was the most important Spanish painter in the 17th century and was court painter to King Philip IV of Spain. He produced many portraits of the royal family, the wider royal household and Spanish nobility. He widely considered one of the greatest artists.

Velázquez painted in a natural style and was renowned for his ability to capture a realistic likeness and a sense of the sitter's character, whilst creating masterpieces that were unlike anything being produced within his time. He used few colours, preferring a simple palette and loose, impressionistic brushstrokes to create a lively realism of his subjects.

DISCUSS

How can a portrait show us both the present and the future at the same time?

COMPARE

- Look at the other portrait of Prince Baltasar in the Wallace Collection, *Prince Baltasar Carlos in the Riding School*. What image does this portrait project about his childhood and education? Why might this be considered propaganda?

Studio of Diego Velázquez, *Prince Baltasar Carlos in the Riding School, c.1640–45*

- Look at the similarities and differences between the Wallace Collection images and contemporary imagery of future British monarch Prince George of Cambridge. Has the use of portraiture by the monarchy changed today?

President Barack Obama with First Lady Michelle Obama meets Prince George as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge watch at Kensington Palace in London, April 22, 2016.

Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

LOUIS XIV

TITLE	Louis XIV
DATE	c. 1699
SIZE	74.9 x 71.8 cm
MATERIALS	Bronze, originally gilded

ARTIST	Antoine Coysevox
DATES	1640–1720
PLACE	France

IN DETAIL

LOUIS XIV

THE PORTRAIT

This dynamic bronze portrait bust, which was originally gilded, is full of movement. The turned head, the flowing curls of the wigged hair that tumble over the shoulders, the sway of the lace cravat, and sash that sweeps diagonally across the body, all give the sense of motion paused in time.

Whilst this portrait bust does not immediately show us the key symbols of monarchy: a crown and sceptre, when we look closer we note the arms of a suit of armour adorned with the fleur de lys, the symbol of the King of France.

This portrait depicts Louis XIV in an idealised way. Majestically noble, his poise and gaze give a sense of his superiority and arrogance. He has, however, been shown in a realistic light, with a slight double chin, heavy jowls, and the sagging flesh of a middle-aged man. Louis would have been in his sixties when this portrait was made.

The lively realism perhaps adds a sense of gravitas, highlighting his wealth of experience gained from being in power for many years by this time. The bronze enhances the powerful impact of the portrait, a material that had been for centuries the choice of official portraiture.

Unlike the many great equestrian statues erected in Louix XIV's honour, which were systematically destroyed during the French Revolution, many portrait busts of Louis XIV survive today. The artist Antoine Coysevox made a marble relief portrait for display on the Grand Staircase at Versailles, which became the reference point for all subsequent portrait busts of the king.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

Louis XIV (1638–1715), also known as Louis the Great, Louis the Grand Monarch, or the Sun King, was the king of France for 72 years and 110 days (1643–1715). During Louis' long reign, France emerged as the leading European power with formidable military force.

Louis XIV ordered the creation of the Palace and Gardens of Versailles. He was sponsor and patron of many artists and composers who helped to shape and reinforce his enduring power. Louis' power was seen as divine and absolute.

Louis commissioned many works of art to portray himself, including over 300 formal portraits. He was often shown in an allegorical or mythological manner: as the god Apollo (Sun King), a Roman emperor, or Alexander the Great in many sculptures, paintings, and in the decoration of major monuments.

As with the Wallace Collection bust, Louis' ageing was shown in his portraits. However, there was still a slight gap between realistic representation and the demands of royal propaganda.

LOUIS XIV

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Antoine Coysevox (1640–1720) was a French sculptor known for his dramatic, dynamic sculptures and decorative work at the Palace of Versailles, and for his portrait busts, which introduced a trend toward the realistic depiction of individual character. He used both an expressive and fluid Baroque style, mixed with aspects of Antique style – an unusual combination for an artist who had never been to Italy.

Coysevox's work was influenced by the bust of Louis XIV made by Bernini in 1665. He became a sculptor to King Louis XIV in 1666. He enriched the Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors) and the Ambassador's staircase, and carved the brilliant equestrian relief of the king (*c.* 1688) for the Salon de la Guerre. Coysevox made over 200 pieces of sculpture, including garden statues, religious works, portrait busts, reliefs and tombs.

DISCUSS

What qualities of the sitter's personality does a sense of movement give the portrait?

Why might people attack and destroy portrait statues of powerful people?

COMPARE

Compare the Wallace Collection bust with other portraits of King Louis XIV. Consider the impact of the scale, material and colour of each medium.

COMPARE

- **Louis XIV by Bernini**
  Explore the influence that this work has on the Wallace Collection bust.
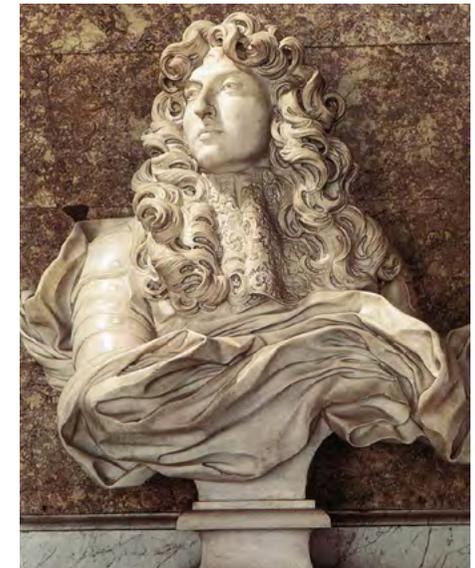
Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Bust of Louis XIV,* 1665, Palace of Versailles

Image: Louis le Grand

LOUIS XIV

COMPARE

- **Madame de Ventadour with Louis XIV and his Heirs**

  Think about how power has been shown passing through generations of the French royal family. This group portrait references six generations and the continuation of power in the Bourbon dynasty.
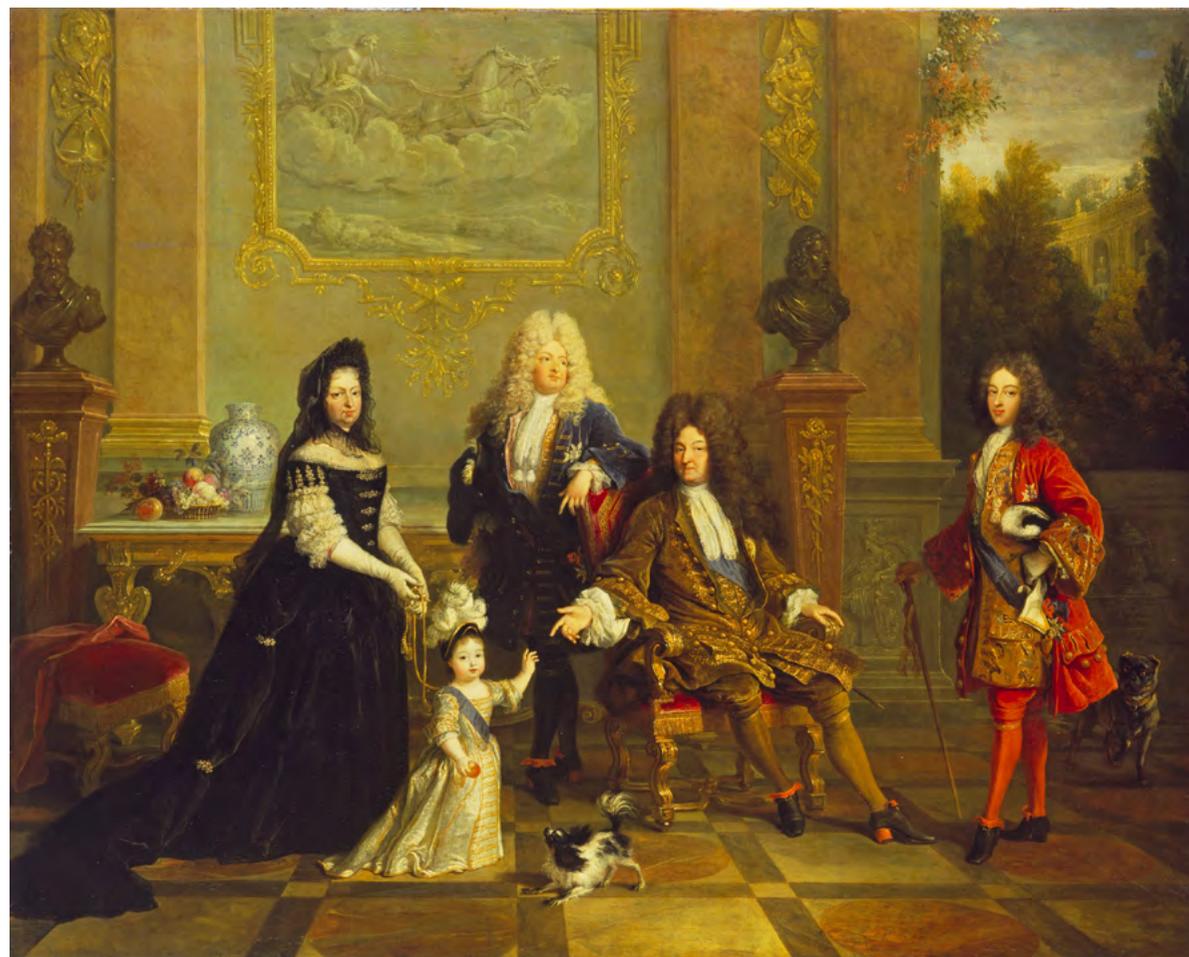
French School,
Madame de Ventadour with Louis XIV and his Heirs, 1715-1720

LOUIS XIV

COMPARE

- **Louis XIV on horseback**

  This portrait statue makes direct reference to equestrian statues of Roman emperors such as the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius in Rome.

Attributed to Roger Schabol, *Louis XIV on horseback*, c. 1700–1705

COMPARE

- **Louis XIV by Hyacinthe Rigaud**

  Consider how the pose and perspective of the king, slightly elevated and looking down on the viewer, gives a sense of grandeur to a king who was known to be small of stature.

  Think about how a visibly ageing king has been depicted with idealising elements: despite his ageing face, he has been given the athletic legs of the dancer he was in his youth.

Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Louis XIV*, 1701

© 2009 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Stéphane Maréchalle

LOUIS XIV

EXPLORE FURTHER

Public portrait statues of the French monarchy were attacked, removed and destroyed during the French Revolution. This type of iconoclasm is a phenomenon that has taken place across cultures and centuries.

- Consider why a piece of art can provoke such strong and violent reactions in viewers.

The statue of Edward Colston was pulled down on 7 June 2020 during a Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol.

Photo: Bristol City Council

GEORGE IV

TITLE George IV
DATE 1822
SIZE 270.5 x 179 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST Thomas Lawrence
DATES 1769–1830
PLACE England

GEORGE IV
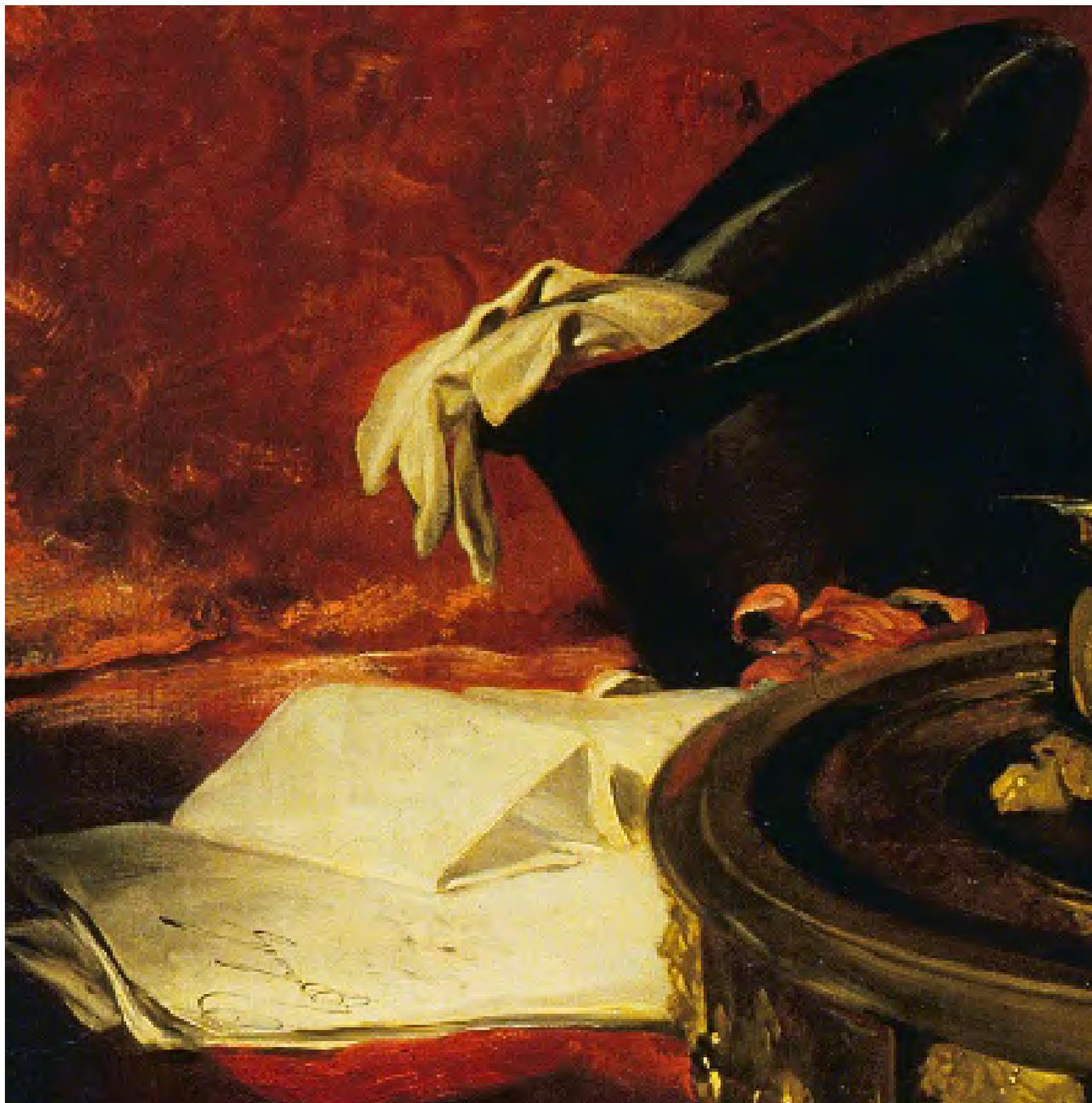
IN DETAIL

GEORGE IV

IN DETAIL

GEORGE IV

THE PORTRAIT

This enormous portrait of King George IV is over 2.5 metres tall. It is unusual as, despite its large scale, the king is shown relaxing in a domestic setting. George wears royal regalia: the garter star is pinned to his breast, with the garter around his leg and the Order of the Golden Fleece on a ribbon around his neck.

George is sitting informally, resting his arm on the back of a large chaise longue. His upturned top hat looks like it might be about to tip sideways, weighed down to one side by his white gloves. Some loose state papers lie next to him, as if just placed there. We could assume we have interrupted him at work, or reading, and he has just turned around to give us his personal attention.

This portrait was painted for the king, who gave it to his current mistress at the time, Lady Conyngham. The artist Thomas Lawrence thought that this was his most 'successful resemblance' of the king. Despite being a gift between lovers, this portrait became well known to the wider public as it was engraved five times by 1841, and is mentioned by Thackeray in *Vanity Fair* and by Dickens in *Bleak House*.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

George IV was King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and King of Hanover from the death of his father in 1820 until his own death in 1830. He was known for his extravagant lifestyle, and was said to be 'rather too fond of women and wine'. A patron of the arts, he set trends and contributed to fashions of the Regency era.

George had an unhappy marriage to Caroline of Brunswick, and even barred her from his coronation in 1821. He was known for his many mistresses and has specific links to the Wallace Collection through his relationship with Isabella Anne Seymour-Conway, second Marchioness of Hertford, who may have been one of his mistresses before he became king. George IV remained on good terms with her son, the future third Marquess, who advised him on his purchases and on occasions acted as his saleroom agent.

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Thomas Lawrence was the most fashionable portrait painter of his day and was the fourth president of the Royal Academy (1820–30). He was first commissioned by George when he was Prince Regent, to paint several portraits of the prince and other allied leaders in wars against Napoleon. Lawrence painted the official state portrait of King George IV's coronation in 1821 which is in the Royal Collection, London.

Lawrence had a successful relationship with King George IV, no doubt due to his incredible talent, but also in part to his ability to portray him in a flattering light. His portraits of George IV portray him in a statesman-like manner, and do not show him as being gluttonous and overweight as he was famously known, nor do they show any evidence of the wigs or make-up he wore.

GEORGE IV

DISCUSS

How has the artist managed to capture aspects of the king's public and personal life?

What message might this image say to his lover?

What other meaning might the public read in the portrait?

COMPARE

Explore other images of George IV, comparing the portrait in the Wallace Collection with:

- His official state portrait by Thomas Lawrence, in the Royal Collection, London
- Caricatures of George IV by political satirists James Gillray and William Heath.

What might the differences between these images tell us about their purpose and intended audience?
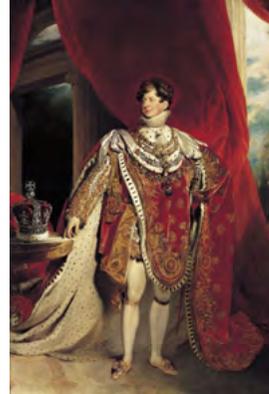
Sir Thomas Lawrence, *George IV*, 1821

Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

James Gillray, published by Hannah Humphrey, *King George IV ('A voluptuary under the horrors of digestion')* , 1792

Image © National Portrait Gallery, London

William Heath, published by S W Fores, *Which is the dirtiest, so foul the stains will be indelible*, 1820

© The Trustees of the British Museum

QUEEN VICTORIA

TITLE	Queen Victoria
DATE	1838
SIZE	142.5 x 112.5 cm
MATERIALS	Oil on canvas

ARTIST	Thomas Sully
DATES	1783–1872
PLACE	England

QUEEN VICTORIA

IN DETAIL

QUEEN VICTORIA

THE PORTRAIT

An eighteen-year-old Queen Victoria is wearing her state robes and is captured in a spontaneous moment, turning to glance over her shoulder, looking back at us as she approaches an empty throne. The Imperial State Crown and Sceptre, which are worn by the monarch after their coronation, are placed to the left side of the portrait. Victoria is shown as a beautiful young woman, her bare neck and shoulders display her youth and sensuality. The artist has created an image which captures a moment of change: Victoria is caught halted between a before and after. She is about to turn and advance towards her future, ascending the throne to be crowned. She is alone in the image, but looking back at the viewer perhaps inviting us to follow her in her future reign?

In her coronation year, at least fifteen artists painted Queen Victoria. The artist Thomas Sully was commissioned to create a full-length portrait of her for which he created this new pose, which was considered daring, innovative and unique. The commissioned full-length version of this image is in a private collection. The Wallace Collection's picture, based on the same life study, was commissioned for an engraving by Charles Edward Wagstaff. Through this engraving Sully's portrait became one of the best known images of the young Queen Victoria.

WHO IS THE SITTER?

Queen Victoria's reign was one of the longest in British history: she ruled for more than sixty years. She became monarch at the age of eighteen and was Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (1837–1901) and Empress of India (1876–1901). The Victorian age was named after her and she ruled over the world's largest ever empire.

Huge advances in medicine, science and technology took place during Victoria's reign. She was the first monarch to be photographed and, in 1857, she posed for the first official royal photographic portrait.

Queen Victoria was very aware of the power of photography to create a huge audience for the royals. At that time, she was the most photographed and painted monarch to have ever lived. Portraits of Queen Victoria document her long reign, as a young Queen, devoted mother and wife to Prince Albert, and her withdrawal from public life as a widow.

WHO IS THE ARTIST?

Thomas Sully (1783–1872) was an American artist who was celebrated for painting in the romanticised style practiced by the two contemporary British artists, Sir Henry Raeburn and Sir Thomas Lawrence. He was famous for his elegant and idealised portraits of fashionable society women, and became known as the 'American Lawrence'.

His painting of Queen Victoria was the most important painting of his career. He took a risk portraying the queen in an unconventional way, a risk which paid off as it positioned him as an artist of national importance.

DISCUSS

How has the artist depicted the power and potential of the young Queen Victoria's future reign?

What change of impact is there with the Wallace Collection version not being full length?

QUEEN VICTORIA

COMPARE

- Compare with Thomas Sully's full length portrait of Queen Victoria.

- Explore other images of Queen Victoria and compare how else her power was portrayed.

Other coronation portraits

Sir George Hayter, *Queen Victoria,* 1863, based on a work of 1838

© National Portrait Gallery, London

John Martin, T*he Coronation of Queen Victoria,* 1839

Tate N05753, digital image © Tate, released under Creative Commons

Photographs of Queen Victoria

After Henry Collen (1798-1879) *Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal*, 1844

Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

W & D Downey (active 1855-1941) *Queen Victoria (1819-1901): Diamond Jubilee portrait,* July 1893

Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

COMPARE

- Consider how Queen Victoria used photography to shape the image of the royal family. What role does portraiture play today in the identity of the future queen, the Duchess of Cambridge?

  What does presenting

  the Duchess' own family photography as official royal portraiture say about her?

QUEEN VICTORIA

EXPLORE FURTHER

- Look at portraits of powerful people over time and consider how portraiture shaped their power in their lifetime and how it continues to shape their identities today.
- Explore resistance and protest as a form of power. What role have portraits played in protests? How do portraits celebrate people power today?

Bust of Queen Nefertiti
c. 1345 BC

The Neues Museum, Berlin

© Photo: Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection of the National Museums in Berlin - Prussian Cultural Heritage Photographer: Sandra Steiß

The Meroë Head
/ The Head of Augustus, 27BC–25BC

© The Trustees of the British Museum

Shirin Neshat, *Malala Yousafzai*, 2018

© National Portrait Gallery, London

Gillian Wearing, *Millicent Fawcett*, 2018

Photo: Garry Knight

ACTIVITIES

- Collect images of powerful people from magazines and newspapers who are using a similar pose. Create a large collage/montage that highlights how the pose has been used again and again.

- Design a statue for someone you feel deserves to be empowered and remembered by society.

- Powerful people don't always make the law, sometimes they challenge and protest the law. Consider how words can be incorporated into a portrait. Design a portrait incorporating the text 'Power to Resist'.

- Think about who the powerful people are in your community, aiming to make it a better place. How can you represent their power in a portrait?

EXTERNAL REFERENCES AND HYPERLINKS

President Barack Obama with First Lady Michelle Obama meets Prince George April 22, 2016.

Official White House

Photo by Pete Souza

LINK>>

Sir Thomas Lawrence, *George IV*, 1821

Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

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John Martin, *The Coronation of Queen Victoria*, 1839, Tate N05753, digital image © Tate released under Creative Commons

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The Meroë Head / The Head of Augustus, 27BC–25BC

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Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Bust of Louis XIV*, 1665, Palace of Versailles

Image: Louis le Grand

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James Gillray, published by Hannah Humphrey, *King George IV ('A voluptuary under the horrors of digestion')*, 1792
Image © National Portrait Gallery, London

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After Henry Collen (1798-1879) *Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal*, 1844

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© 2009 RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Stéphane Maréchalle

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Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

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Gillian Wearing, *Millicent Fawcett*, 2018
Photo: Garry Knight

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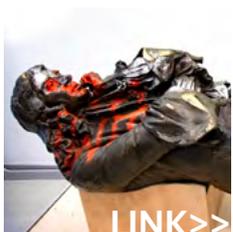
The statue of Edward Colston was pulled down on 7 June 2020 during a Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol.

Photo: Bristol City Council

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Sir George Hayter, *Queen Victoria Replica*, 1863, based on a work of 1838

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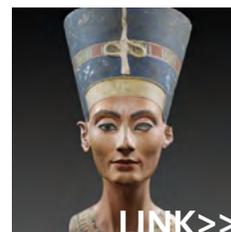
Bust of Queen Nefertiti c. 1345 BC The Neues Museum, Berlin © Photo: National Museums in Berlin - Prussian Cultural Heritage Photographer: Sandra Steiß
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