

Face to Face

SPRING 2005

National
Portrait
Gallery



My Favourite Portrait
by Mary McCartney
Donald

Dame Judi Dench's
portrait unveiled

Roy Foster on the
Irish in England

Special offer from
Modern Painters

From the Director

COVER

Dame Judi Dench
by Alessandro Raho,
2004

Recent acquisitions are always a matter of special celebration. The Gallery has good reason to be particularly pleased about the newly commissioned portrait of Dame Judi Dench by Alessandro Raho, created with the support of JPMorgan through the Fund for New Commissions, as well as the acquisition of *Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk*, purchased through private treaty sale, with the support of the National Art Collections Fund and the National Heritage Memorial Fund (whose twenty-fifth anniversary is itself celebrated in April).

The portrait of Judi Dench, in which she is portrayed standing isolated in space, grand, forceful, and ready to adopt any of her famous recent roles, from Elizabeth I in *Shakespeare in Love* to 'M' in the Bond films, follows in the line of portraits of great women actors in the Collection, from Mrs Siddons by Sir William Beechey to Fiona Shaw, a popular recent commission by BP Award winner Victoria Russell.

Thomas Howard, 'courtier and conspirator', was an immensely powerful figure in the Tudor court. However, he did not survive long after creating a plan to form a rival faction and marry Mary Queen of Scots, and was beheaded in 1572. Unusually for the Elizabethan period, he is portrayed with his teeth very slightly showing, proud perhaps that they were in good order.

Developing the Collection is a central priority for the Gallery, and much of our time is spent working on ways in which we can increase our ability to acquire great portraits for the nation.

Sandy Nairne
Sandy Nairne
DIRECTOR

MY FAVOURITE PORTRAIT

Mary McCartney Donald



Born in London in 1969, Mary McCartney Donald is the daughter of Paul and Linda McCartney and a photographer in her own right.

Self-portrait
by Mary McCartney Donald,
October 2004
© Mary McCartney Donald

MY MOTHER always had the most amazing ability to pull intimate moments out of everyday life, and this portrait of John Lennon really encapsulates that for me. She would have her camera with her at all times so that in an instant she could document moments in people's lives as they caught her eye. Although this photograph of John Lennon was taken in a recording studio, it has a certain relaxed peacefulness to it. The darkness of the background carries the viewer's focus straight to John and his expression is one of contemplation, of thoughtfulness. When you study his face more closely, you can discern the studio recording sound desk reflected in his glasses. This portrait shows that, as a photographer, my mother had a quality that allowed her subject to feel utterly at ease. It was her talent for capturing such intimate, informal portraits that inspired me to become a photographer too.



John Lennon
by Linda McCartney, 1968
Given by the photographer,
1994
© Estate of Linda McCartney



THREE ROYAL COURT DIRECTORS THE ARTISTIC PROCESS

LEFT
Three Royal Court Theatre Directors (Katie Mitchell; Stephen Daldry; Ian Rickson)
by Justin Mortimer, 2004

BELOW
Harold Pinter
by Justin Mortimer, 1992

IN A GOOD PORTRAIT THE LIKENESS is of no real importance. Physical descriptions are always poor catalysts for a picture.

So when I was asked to do a group portrait of three Royal Court directors, it was the disparate personalities of the subjects and the dynamic between them which formed the key to the composition. The final arrangement is more to do with the way they related to each other than with a concern for pictorial balance.

After an initial meeting with the directors at the Gallery, a second meeting was arranged at the Royal Court Theatre. I was interested to see the space they had all worked in (especially the non-public areas) and, in the end, the very informal sitting took place in a rehearsal space at the theatre.

These three friends clearly had a huge fondness for each other and mutual respect for the extraordinary achievements of each. I tried to remain neutral and to focus on purely observing them rather than participating in their dialogue, in order to witness their interreaction.

During the following two hours, there was a remarkable surfacing of unspoken rivalries and jostling egos and at one point a quite palpable sense of tension. Even at this early stage, I knew this was the pith from which I could work.

I took about 100 digital and 35mm photographs – they were no more than snaps, nothing was posed. After scanning them into a computer, I spent many weeks cutting and pasting, rearranging arms, legs, heads, repositioning bodies and eventually coming up with a number of compositional plans which would hold clues to the final outcome.

After many years of painting I know that if I try to cling to one single concrete idea, new thoughts and directions which occur during the actual painting can't be simply shoe-horned in.

So during these early weeks and subsequent months I made many drawings, digital prints, smaller watercolours, acrylics and oils. Whilst exploring many different approaches, I was looking out for an emergent theme. But even after stretching the main large canvas I was open to the possibility of sudden shifts in direction. This is a risky strategy as it often leads to failure and frustration, yet it is the method I find the most successful in allowing room for the serendipitous, which will eventually drive the portrait.

At this stage I was working closely with the Gallery's people, and it was clear to me that they were anxious for the sitters' status to be reflected in the composition of the painting. I eventually arrived at a solution – by this time I was on my third large canvas! I rejected my initial approach, in which the sitters had become bystanders in my own self-imposed narrative, and refocused on that extraordinary meeting.

Ian Rickson (right-hand figure) is smiling at Stephen Daldry – you can decide if it is defensive or not. That arm of Stephen's isn't necessarily affectionate; it is controlling. These two friends have unfinished agendas.

In the painting, Katie Mitchell is a singularly enigmatic and withdrawn figure. Her gesture is ambiguous. I don't think she much cares what the two men are up to. I was reluctant to place her behind the men, because it could appear that I cared less about her in the structure of the painting; ironically I always felt she was the anchor of the composition and the drama played out between the three of them.

The stripping out of real colour, the editing of literal space, heightened the three-way dynamic. By unbalancing the composition I was making an 'itch', an annoying psychological dissonance. The dark could represent theatrical space, but, more importantly, it compresses and squeezes the figures, holding them in an uncomfortable encounter.

Justin Mortimer

Justin Mortimer (b.1970) studied at the Slade School of Fine Art. He won the BP Portrait Award in 1991 and was subsequently commissioned by the Gallery to paint Harold Pinter for the Collection. On 8 September 2004 the Gallery announced the completion of the second in a series of portrait commissions, generously funded by the Jerwood Charity. This new portrait of three directors of London's Royal Court Theatre is now on display in Room 41.



IRELAND COMES TO LONDON

Professor Roy Foster has written widely on Irish history, society and politics in the modern period, as well as on Victorian high politics and culture.



ABOVE
George Bernard Shaw
by Sir Bernard Partridge,
1894

FAR RIGHT, FROM TOP
Daniel O'Connell
by Sir George Hayter, 1834

The Irish Girl
by Ford Madox Brown, 1860
© Yale Center for British Art,
Paul Mellon Fund

RIGHT
Daniel Maclise
by Edward Matthew Ward,
1846
Given by Sir George Scharf,
1880

ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO I published an essay called 'Marginal Men and Micks on the Make', dealing with some of the odd interchanges between England and Ireland during the period of the Union between the countries (1800–1922). My point was that while more English people 'adopted' Ireland as a cause than might be remembered, there was another suppressed tradition involving Irish people who flourished in England, often through the routes afforded by literature, journalism and theatre. The art historian Fintan Cullen, who was completing his book on Irish portraits, pointed out to me that I had passed over the influential tradition of Irish artists working in Victorian London, and the idea for the current exhibition, curated by us both, was born.

Of course, the Irish in nineteenth-century Britain have claimed a good deal of attention from historians – but mostly in terms of working-class communities and 'navvies' digging canals and making roads, and the prejudice and discrimination they often suffered. There were other traditions too, such as the activists and 'agitators' who supported the nationalist political organisations, both revolutionary and constitutional, active in Victorian Britain. And an important part of the great flowering of creative achievement at the turn of the nineteenth-century, known as the Irish Revival, was based among the Irish in London – the poetry of Yeats, the plays of Wilde and Shaw. There are wonderful images of this creative activity preserved in the Gallery and elsewhere, and several of them are on show. But it seemed to Fintan and to me that they should be seen against the background of a long-established tradition, whereby Irish writers, artists and politicians came to make their fortunes in London, often leaving a distinctive stamp behind them – and often sustaining nationalist allegiances while making the most of imperial opportunities.

When the old Irish parliament was abolished in 1800, and Irish MPs went to sit at Westminster, there was an accompanying shift of focus and fashion to London. Contemporaries noted how young hopefuls set off on the Irish mailboat to make their fortunes in the English metropolis. Our exhibition opens with Victoria's



accession in 1837, and by then this process was well established. London journalism in the age of Thackeray was a kind of Irish monopoly; the members of the influential circle around *Fraser's Magazine*, drawn by Daniel Maclise, are a case in point. But a distinctively Irish presence was established in other areas too. We were particularly pleased to track down the arresting portrait by Maclise of the beautiful Caroline Norton as 'Erin', painted around 1846. Norton was Irish, brilliant, and slightly scandalous after her severance from an unhappy marriage and rumoured affair with Prime Minister Melbourne, which inspired George Meredith's novel *Diana of the Crossways*. She wrote novels and political journalism, and was an influential figure in literary salons. Maclise painted her as the personification of 'Justice' for the House of Lords murals, later adapting the image for 'Erin'.

Maclise's fellow-Irishman, the sculptor John Henry Foley, provided key images by which the British understood their empire: the massive group representing 'Asia' on the Albert Memorial and public statues of national heroes like Caractacus. Both men were part of the artistic world of mid-Victorian London – as were, less expectedly, a number of beautiful Irish models, painted by Tissot, Whistler and Ford Madox Brown, who also appear in this exhibition. It might not

seem surprising that an Irish background or accent was no disadvantage in the Bohemian worlds of art or the theatre (where the great Irish actor-manager-playwright Dion Boucicault wielded immense influence in mid-century). But in the professional worlds of the law and medicine, and the polite society of political salons, Irish people also came to the fore, as witnessed by the hero of Anthony Trollope's great sequence of political novels, Phineas Finn, and in real life by political *littérateurs* such as Justin McCarthy.

Yet there is an extra edge to all this, as Trollope well knew. Fond though he was of Ireland, where he had lived for many years, he could not abide the rise of the aggressively nationalist politics that came to dominate the Irish cause at Westminster by the 1880s, under the legendary Home Rule leader Charles Stewart Parnell. Parnell and his lieutenants, such as the equally striking-looking John Dillon, were constantly represented by political cartoonists as well as portrait painters; some of the most vivid images of an Irish presence in London are supplied by Sidney Prior Hall's brilliant sketches of the Irish Members in Parliament, or of Irish people attending the Special Commission hearings investigating the accusations against Parnell. Earlier still, images of the terrible Irish Famine of the 1840s had been presented to London audiences not only through the drawings of the *Illustrated London News*, but in large-scale oil paintings of scenes of eviction and desolation, exhibited at the Royal Academy and elsewhere – such as Robert George Kelly's dramatic oil 'An Ejection in Ireland', which we have borrowed from an American collection. Ireland was in one sense at the centre of Empire: many middle-class Irish Catholics took the Indian Civil Service examinations, or qualified for the Indian medical service, and found careers far from home. But there was another sense in which the country's own colonised past put it in a different and awkward relation to the neighbouring island. The variety and range of the images of Ireland and Irish people presented to the Victorian public, as reflected in this exhibition, offer a vivid illustration of this. They also suggest that, as the century wore on, the Irish in London had access to circles of influence that they used to the full.

Certainly the stir created by the young W.B. Yeats from the 1880s bears this out. He was living in the artistic colony of Bedford Park; his sister worked for William Morris, his brother Jack provided sketches of London life for illustrated magazines, and their father painted portraits of Irish people prominent in London life, such as Parnell's predecessor, the ageing Home Rule politician Isaac Butt. John Butler Yeats's iconic painting of his poetic eldest son in 1900 has been lent by the National Gallery of Ireland for this exhibition: it is the quintessential expression of the dreamy, otherworldly 'Celtic Twilight' poet. But much of the 'Celtic Revival' enterprise had been planned, marketed and disseminated from London: not only through Yeats's circle, but also through the influential networks of Irish book-reviewers, poets' groups and literary clubs – the most influential of which, the Southwark Literary Society, had been well established before Yeats appeared on the scene. The world of London drama was also strongly Irish-influenced before Yeats

and Shaw opened their new plays *The Land of Heart's Desire* and *Arms and the Man* at the Avenue Theatre in 1894. Oscar Wilde was about to hit the peak of success with *The Importance of Being Earnest*, but its run would coincide with his terrible fall. On the elaborate theatre programmes in the exhibition, his name is silently removed as the trial reaches its climax (Wilde was destroyed by the cross-examination of yet another Irish careerist, the barrister and future politician Edward Carson). At that point, the mid-1890s, people were still arguing about whether London was really the artistic capital of Ireland.

This was not a line that could be sustained after 1900 when, as the Irish novelist George Moore put it, 'the sceptre of intelligence' was passed back to Dublin. There was something of a repatriation of writers and artists, including most of the Yeats family – though the London market remained a determinant, and certainly neither Wilde nor Shaw had ever thought of returning. The new Abbey Theatre emerged, to give Irish drama a distinctive voice, and by 1904 it was mounting very successful tours to London. Politics were also radicalised after Victoria's death; Home Rule, still apparently dominating the Irish scene, would be replaced by more revolutionary separatist elements. But the period from the 1830s to the end of the nineteenth century, when the relationship between Britain and Ireland had often come under severe strain, was also an era when Irish people found a niche in London, flourished and made their mark on the imperial metropolis – while remaining distinctly and distinctively Irish. The riches of the Gallery and other great collections preserve a wealth of images testifying to this influential and irrepressible skein in what the playwright Sebastian Barry has called 'the great muddled wool-basket of Empire'. As the Introduction to the catalogue by the Irish actor Fiona Shaw hints, it is a tradition which echoes in our own day, and it seems well worth celebrating.

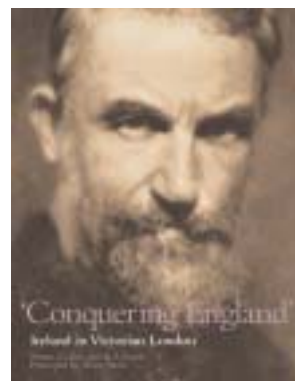
Roy Foster



CONQUERING ENGLAND IRELAND IN VICTORIAN LONDON

9 March – 19 June 2005
Porter Gallery

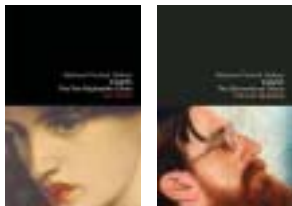
The exhibition is curated by Fintan Cullen, Professor of Art History at the University of Nottingham and author of *The Irish Face: Redefining the Irish Portrait*, and Roy Foster, Carroll Professor of Irish History at the University of Oxford and author of the acclaimed recent biography of W.B. Yeats.



A fully illustrated book with essays by Fintan Cullen and R.F. Foster, with a foreword by Fiona Shaw, accompanies the exhibition. Special Gallery price £10.99, paperback (RRP £12.99).

LEFT
Oscar Wilde (detail)
by W. & D. Downey,
1891

PUBLISHING INSIGHTS



PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER

We are offering Members an exclusive opportunity to purchase both *The Pre-Raphaelite Circle* and *The Bloomsbury Group* (available from May 2005) at a special price of £7.99 each (RRP £9.99) until 15 June 2005. To take advantage of this discount, please contact National Portrait Gallery mail order on 020 7306 0055 ext.210 or visit www.npg.org.uk/shop

Please quote **Insights Special Offer** and your Membership number on all orders

FAR RIGHT, FROM TOP

Vanessa Bell (née Stephen)
by Duncan Grant, c.1918

Lytton Strachey

by Dora Carrington, 1916
Bequeathed by Frances Partridge, 2003



ABOVE

Self-portrait

by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1847

RIGHT

The Rossetti Family

by Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), 1863

Given by Miss Helen Macgregor, 1978

EACH YEAR THE GALLERY publishes a wide range of catalogues, books and paper products – from the 852-page *Complete Illustrated Catalogue* (published in spring 2004) to the humble postcard. Our publishing mission is twofold: to promote knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of British portraiture and history, and to generate revenue for the Gallery. It is difficult to get the balance right, but this year we are endeavouring to create new audiences for books and portraiture with the launch of an exciting series called **Insights**.

Insights will draw on the rich collections of the Gallery, providing concise and perceptive introductions to particular literary and artistic personalities and themes. Some groups of sitters attract more attention than others but this series aims to profile less familiar portraits alongside the well-known – and not only those that hang on the Gallery's walls.

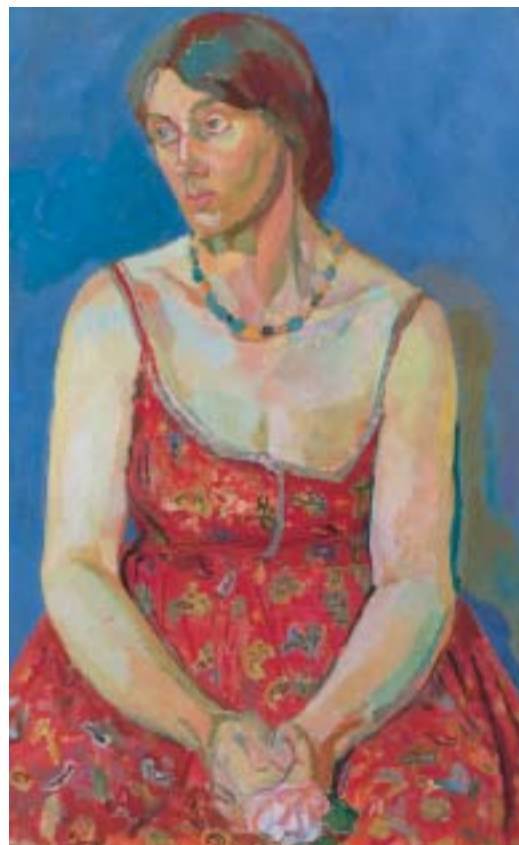
The first two titles in the series – *The Pre-Raphaelite Circle* and *The Bloomsbury Group* – explore the intriguing theme of how groups of people are drawn together, whether by birth, through education or through their artistic and intellectual vision, to make a powerful impact on cultural history. Our fascination with the way in which people interact is already reflected in the organisation of many of the Gallery's rooms. For example, the Kit-Cat Club portraits in Room 9 show a diverse mix of powerful eighteenth-century men brought together through politics, while the BritArt portraits in the Ground Floor galleries highlight contemporary artists united by art-college friendships.

The Pre-Raphaelite Circle by Jan Marsh explores how a small group of artists with very specific ideals have, with time, become an internationally celebrated 'movement' in art. Born from the youthful enthusiasm



of John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the Brotherhood was founded as a semi-secret group committed to exposing the art of the Royal Academy as 'sloshy'. But, from the start, their intertwined private lives – from the tragedy of Elizabeth Siddal's drug-induced demise to the triumph of Millais's appointment as President of the RA – attracted equal notoriety.

Likewise, in *The Bloomsbury Group* Frances Spalding recounts how this network of artists, lovers and patrons recorded one another obsessively in both words and images. Her text explores the impact of



Bloomsbury personalities on each other, but also shows how they collectively created a revolution in twentieth-century British style, which resonates with contemporary painters, writers, actors, designers, fashion editors and publishers. This intimate story of their lives includes both Dora Carrington's dramatic portrait of Lytton Strachey and many intimate images from the Ottoline Morrell photographic albums, all of which were recently acquired by the Gallery.

A display of the Ottoline Morrell photographs is planned for the Bookshop Gallery this summer, timed to coincide with publication. Forthcoming titles for **Insights** in 2005 and 2006 include *Self-Portraits*, *Henry VIII and his Wives*, *Shakespeare and his Circle* and *The Golden Era of British Cinema*, but we welcome your thoughts on other themes to add to the list in future.

Celia Joicey

PUBLISHING MANAGER

Each book purchased helps to support the Gallery

DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS, the Gallery's Learning and Access Department has been working with the charity Connect to identify ways in which people with aphasia can be encouraged to visit and participate in the Gallery's activities. Aphasia is a communication disability, usually caused by a stroke, sometimes by a head injury or a tumour.

Connect is a London-based charity promoting services, new opportunities and a better quality of life for stroke sufferers with aphasia. The charity helps such people, as well as their families and friends, to develop new ways to communicate and rebuild confidence.

The Learning and Access Department and freelance artists have been exploring new arts opportunities with people who use Connect's art and photography groups. A series of sessions using practical art and photography has been developed through a combination of outreach work at Connect and visits to the Gallery. Future dates for joint working with these two groups have been planned up to March 2005.

The project aims to use the media of art and photography, encouraging people to gain confidence and to explore new leisure and educational opportunities. The Arts Access Project has made the

Gallery staff more aware of the access issues people with aphasia frequently encounter. For example, how do you find information on exhibitions or art classes if you have limited reading, writing or verbal communication skills?

The findings from the Connect Arts Access Project will be disseminated to healthcare, voluntary and social sectors and arts professionals around the country.

You can find out more about aphasia and Connect's work by telephoning 020 7367 0840 or visiting their website at www.ukconnect.org

Lucy Ribeiro

LEARNING AND ACCESS MANAGER



LEFT
Participants in **Connect** working on self-portraits.

REACHING OUT, DRAWING IN is a new community education initiative funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It runs to 2007. The Gallery has embarked on a series of six exhibitions in the Studio Gallery, collaborating with community groups and partner organisations.

The project will enable the Gallery to undertake a sustained programme of new audience development, with exciting opportunities for wider access to its collections through innovative and engaging interpretation. The project is aimed particularly at those who wouldn't usually visit the Gallery such as

young adults and disabled people. The displays will be open to all visitors to the Gallery.

The first exhibition, *Inner Picture*, developed with Orleans House Gallery in Twickenham, was on show at the Gallery until 16 January 2005. Young people from Richmond-upon-Thames PAYP (Positive Activities for Young People) holiday scheme and Hounslow Pupil Referral Unit worked with artists Madeleine Conn and Will Bishop-Stephens to create their own artwork, interpreting and responding to portraits chosen from the Collection. The participants created three-dimensional installations exploring the character of the sitter, and an animation imagining what happens in the Gallery after it has closed for the evening.

Family Faces, from 14 February to 4 September 2005, is the second exhibition in the series. The project involved families from seven schools in the London borough of Haringey participating in the Parental Involvement Programme. They worked alongside ceramicist Matt Sherratt to create clay sculptures of their families. After visiting the Gallery to explore family portraits, they took part in a series of outreach workshops to create their own artwork. This work, alongside the portraits that inspired it, displayed side by side, offers an alternative view of the Gallery's collections and an insight into the lives of those taking part.

Future projects in the series include an exhibition of self-portraits by groups throughout the UK, and a photographer in residence.

Toni Parker

REACHING OUT, DRAWING IN PROJECT MANAGER

REACHING OUT AND DRAWING IN



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT
Families taking part in a **Reaching Out, Drawing In** session at the Gallery.

Young person dressed up as Queen Elizabeth I during an **Inner Picture** workshop.

A selection of work made for the **Family Faces** exhibition.



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