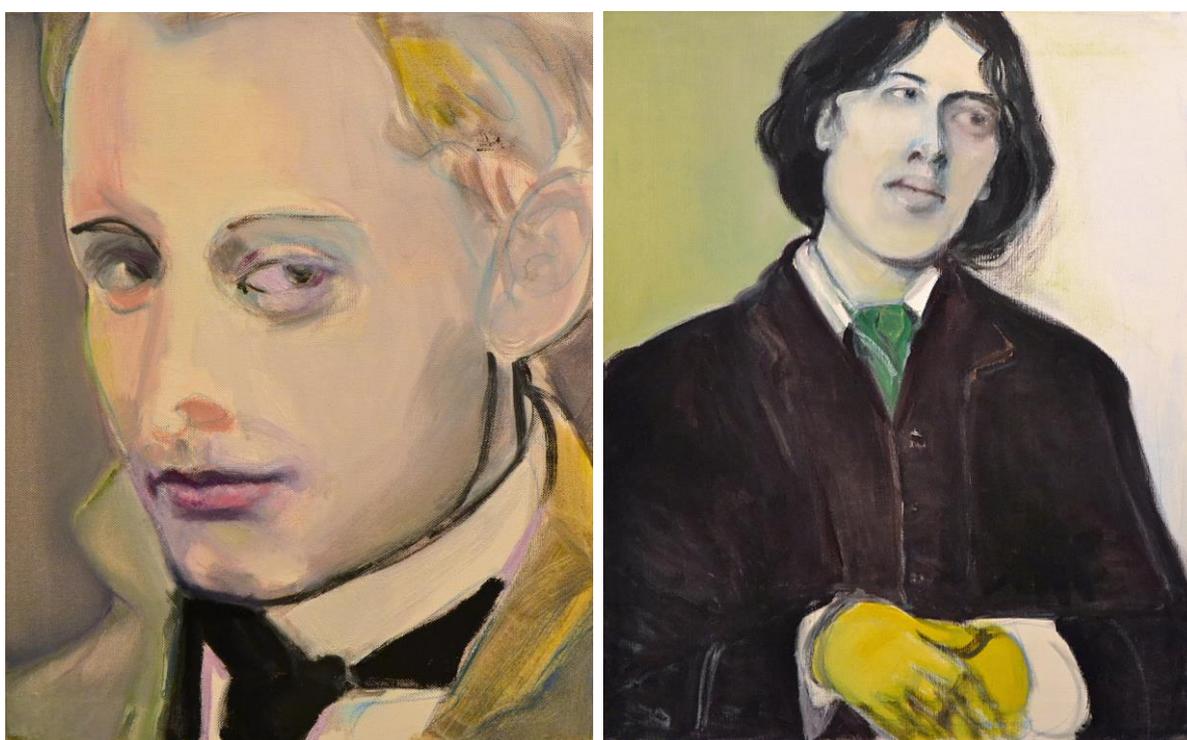


News Release

Monday 3 April 2017

PORTRAITS OF OSCAR WILDE AND ‘BOSIE’ BY MARLENE DUMAS GO ON DISPLAY AT NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY TO MARK HOMOSEXUALITY DECRIMINALISATION ANNIVERSARY



Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie) by Marlene Dumas, 2016 (c) Marlene Dumas; **Oscar Wilde** by Marlene Dumas, 2016 (c) Marlene Dumas

Striking portraits of Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and his lover Lord Alfred Douglas (1870–1945), also known as ‘Bosie,’ painted last year by contemporary artist Marlene Dumas (b.1953) have gone on display in the National Portrait Gallery’s Victorian galleries, it was announced today (Monday 3 April 2017.)

The portraits in oil, based on nineteenth-century photographs, are loaned by the artist to the Gallery to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales. While the Gallery holds several original photographs of both sitters, it does not own an oil painting of Oscar Wilde.

Displayed adjacent to the grand *enfilade* setting of the Gallery’s ‘Statesmen’s Gallery,’ the two large portraits are exhibited for the first time since originally being shown as part of *Inside: Artists and Writers in Reading Prison*, an installation developed by Artangel in 2016 that responded to Wilde’s incarceration there between 1895 and 1897.

Oscar Wilde’s final works, *De Profundis* (1897, published 1905) and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898) emerged from the profoundly affecting experience of his imprisonment which followed his criminal

conviction for his relationship with Bosie, at a time when male homosexuality was illegal. The portraits go on display on the date on which Wilde's trial started in 1895.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'Marlene Dumas's haunting portraits of Oscar Wilde and Bosie become even more resonant when installed in our Victorian Galleries. Through this contemporary intervention, we are invited to think about the fate of Wilde and consider the way in which attitudes and tolerance have shifted over the ensuing years, which is especially timely as we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in this country. Our sincere thanks to Marlene Dumas, one of the greatest painters working today, for making this evocative display possible.'

Artist Marlene Dumas says: 'I have been a fan of Oscar Wilde ever since I can remember. As a writer of great wit, his combination of intelligence and humour is unique. He was imprisoned at Reading for two years for loving the beautiful, untrustworthy 'golden boy' Bosie. I have painted Wilde before the entry into the prison that destroyed his life and tried to show him less as a proud author and more as a vulnerable man in relation to the young lover who led him to his tragic end.'

Rosie Broadley, Curator of **Marlene Dumas: Oscar Wilde and Bosie**, and Collections Curator, 19th Century, National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'These portraits are resonant of the conflict that existed between public and private identities in the Victorian era. Dumas's work explores constructions of identity, often probing questions of gender, race and sexuality.'

Irish-born Oscar Wilde was one of the most significant writers, dramatists and poets of the late nineteenth-century remembered for his witty epigrams, his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, his poems, essays and short stories, and his plays including *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Lord Alfred Douglas ('Bosie') was a British author, poet, translator, and political commentator.

Marlene Dumas (born 3 August 1953) is a South African born artist and painter who lives and works in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In the past Dumas produced paintings, collages, drawings, prints and installations. She now works mainly with oil on canvas and ink on paper. Dumas' work spans over thirty years and from September 2014 to May 2015 The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Tate, and the Beyeler Foundation organized a major retrospective of her work. The National Portrait Gallery owns Dumas's portrait *Amy-Blue* of the singer Amy Winehouse.

Marlene Dumas: Oscar Wilde and Bosie forms part of a year-long programme of special displays and events, entitled 'I am me,' at the National Portrait Gallery exploring sexuality, gender, art and identity.

This includes **Double Take: Akram Zaatari and the Arab Image Foundation** (from March 30), a display of the work of the contemporary Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari who has selectively appropriated images from the archive of the Lebanese studio photographer Hashem el Madani, active in Saida, Lebanon from the 1950s, and presents them in new contexts. The display features a selection of Madani's images, in which two people of the same sex kiss or tenderly embrace, to explore the strict moral codes of Lebanese culture.

The season continues with **David Gwinnutt: Before We Were Men** a display that chronicles the 1980s London art and club scene of Leigh Bowery, Derek Jarman, Ossie Clark and Gilbert & George. Gwinnutt photographed directors, writers, designers and artists who together formed a vibrant and influential underground gay culture.

There is also **Speak its Name!** (until August 6) a display of photographic portraits to marking the fiftieth anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales in 1967. This display includes portraits of fashion designer Alexander McQueen and journalist Isabella Blow, politician Angela Eagle, actors Ben Whishaw and Saffron Burrows, poet Jackie Kay, diver Tom Daley and singer Will Young. Their portraits are accompanied by quotations from the sitters who share their experiences of coming out. These range from coming out to friends and family, to wanting to be honest to their fans and the media.

Also as part of the *I am me* season, the Gallery's spring exhibition, now open, ***Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun: Behind the mask, another mask*** draws together over 100 works by French artist Claude Cahun (1894–1954) and British contemporary artist Gillian Wearing (b.1963). While they were born seventy years apart, they share similar themes around gender, identity, masquerade and performance.

DISPLAY:

Marlene Dumas: Oscar Wilde and Bosie, Victorian Galleries, Admission Free (3 April – 30 October 2017)

Also in *I am me* - A season exploring art and identity at the National Portrait Gallery:

Double Take: Akram Zaatari and the Arab Image Foundation Room 33, Admission Free (30 March – 3 September 2017)

David Gwynnutt: Before We Were Men Room 39, Admission free (16 March-24 September 2017)

Speak its Name! Balcony Gallery, Admission Free (25 November 2016 – 6 August 2017)

Gillian Wearing and Claude Cahun: Behind the Mask, another Mask

Lerner Contemporary Galleries, Admission charge (9 March – 29 May 2017)

For further press information and image requests please contact: Neil Evans, Media Relations Manager, National Portrait Gallery, London Tel: 020 7312 2452 (not for publication) Email: nevans@npg.org.uk

Press images: npg.org.uk/press

National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE, opening hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 10am – 6pm (Gallery closure commences at 5.50pm) **Late Opening:** Thursday, Friday: 10am – 9pm (Gallery closure commences at 8.50pm) **Nearest Underground:** Leicester Square/Charing Cross **General information:** 0207 306 0055 **Recorded information:** 020 7312 2463

NOTES TO EDITORS – THE WORKS:

Oscar Wilde

By Marlene Dumas,

Oil on canvas, 2016

Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie)

By Marlene Dumas,

Oil on canvas, 2016

Both works on loan from the artist's studio