

Press Release

Wednesday 28 February 2018

VICTORIAN GIANTS: THE BIRTH OF ART PHOTOGRAPHY

Julia Margaret Cameron, Lewis Carroll, Clementina Hawarden and Oscar Rejlander

Spring Season Sponsor Herbert Smith Freehills LLP



Alice Liddell by Lewis Carroll, 1858 (c) National Portrait Gallery, London; **Mountain Nymph, Sweet Liberty**) by Julia Margaret Cameron, 1866 © Wilson Centre for Photography, **Photographic Study** , **5 Prince's Gardens (Clementina Maude)** by Clementina Hawarden, 1863–4 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The National Portrait Gallery stages an exhibition of photographs by four of the most celebrated figures in art photography, opening Thursday 1 March, 2018.

Victorian Giants: The Birth of Art Photography (1 March – 20 May 2018), combines for the first time portraits by Lewis Carroll (1832–98), Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–79), Oscar Rejlander (1813–75) and Lady Clementina Hawarden (1822–65).

The four created an unlikely alliance. Rejlander was a Swedish *émigré* with a mysterious past; Cameron was a middle-aged expatriate from colonial Ceylon (now Sri Lanka); Carroll was an Oxford academic and writer of fantasy literature; and Hawarden was landed gentry, the child of a Scottish naval hero and a Spanish beauty, 26 years younger. Yet, Carroll, Cameron and Hawarden all studied under Rejlander briefly, and maintained lasting associations, exchanging ideas about portraiture and narrative. Influenced by historical painting and frequently associated with the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, they formed a bridge between the art of the past and the art of the future, standing as true giants in Victorian photography. Their radical attitudes towards photography have informed artistic practice ever since.

The exhibition is the first to examine the relationship between the four ground-breaking artists. Drawn from public and private collections internationally, it features some of the most breath-taking images in photographic history, including many which have not been seen in Britain since they were made.

Victorian Giants: The Birth of Art Photography features the work of Swedish born ‘Father of Photoshop’ Oscar Rejlander and includes the finest surviving print of his famous picture *Two Ways of Life* of 1856-7, which used his pioneering technique combining several different negatives to create a single final image. Constructed from over 30 separate negatives, *Two Ways of Life* was so large it had to be printed on two sheets of paper joined together.



Two ways of Life by Oscar Rejlander, 1856-7 (c) Moderna Museet, Stockholm

An album of photographs by Rejlander purchased by the National Portrait Gallery following an export bar in 2015 also goes on display together with other treasures from the Gallery’s world-famous holdings of Rejlander, Cameron and Carroll, which for conservation reasons are rarely on view. The exhibition also includes works by cult hero Clementina Hawarden, a closely associated photographer. This is the first major showing of her work since the exhibition *Lady Hawarden* at the V&A in London and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles in 1990.

Lewis Carroll’s photographs of Alice Liddell, his muse for *Alice in Wonderland*, are among the most beloved photographs of the National Portrait Gallery’s Collection. Less well known are the photographs made of Alice years later, showing her as an adult. The exhibition brings together these works for the first time.

Visitors will be able to see how each photographer approached the same subject, as when Cameron and Rejlander both photographed the poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson and the scientist Charles Darwin, or when Carroll and Cameron both photographed the actress, Ellen Terry. The exhibition also includes the legendary studies of human emotion Rejlander made for Darwin, on loan from the Darwin Archive at Cambridge University.

Lenders to the exhibition include the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin; the Hulton Archive, Getty Images; the Moderna Museet, Stockholm; the Munich Stadtmuseum; the Royal Collection; Tate; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and the Wilson Centre for Photography.

Victorian Giants: The Birth of Art Photography includes portraits of sitters such as Charles Darwin, Alice Liddell, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Thomas Carlyle, George Frederick Watts, Ellen Terry and Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery, London, says: ‘The National Portrait Gallery has one of the finest holdings of Victorian photographs in the world. As well as some of the Gallery’s rarely seen treasures, such as the original negative of Lewis Carroll’s portrait of Alice Liddell and images of Alice and her siblings being displayed for the first time, this exhibition is a rare opportunity to see the works of all four of these highly innovative and influential artists.’

Phillip Prodger, Head of Photographs, National Portrait Gallery, London, and Curator of **Victorian Giants: The Birth of Art Photography**, says: ‘When people think of Victorian photography, they sometimes think of stiff, fusty portraits of women in crinoline dresses, and men in bowler hats. *Victorian Giants* is anything but. Here visitors can see the birth of an idea – raw, edgy, experimental – the Victorian avant-garde, not just in photography, but in art writ large. The works of Cameron, Carroll, Hawarden and Rejlander forever changed thinking about photography and its expressive power. These are pictures that inspire and delight. And this is a show that lays bare the unrivalled creative energy, and optimism, that came with the birth of new ways of seeing.’

Victorian Giants: The Birth of Art Photography is curated by Phillip Prodger Ph.D, Head of Photographs at the National Portrait Gallery, London. He is author and editor of eighteen books and catalogues, including the acclaimed *Eggleston Portraits* (2016). A recognised expert in Victorian photography, he is the author of the award-winning *Time Stands Still: Muybridge and the Instantaneous Photography Movement* (2003) and *Darwin's Camera: Art and Photography in the Theory of Evolution* (2009), named by *New York Times* as one of the best art books of the year.

VICTORIAN GIANTS: THE BIRTH OF ART PHOTOGRAPHY

1 March -20 May 2018, at the National Portrait Gallery, London www.npg.org.uk

Tickets with donation: Full price £12 / Concessions £10.50

Tickets without donation Full price £10 / Concessions £8.50 (Free for Members and Patrons)

www.npg.org.uk/victoriangiants or 020 7321 6600 #VictorianGiants

Press View: Wednesday 28 February 2018 10.00-12.00 (with a curators' tour at 10.30).

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a full-colour illustrated book by curator Phillip Prodger which will be available to purchase from the National Portrait Gallery shops priced £29.95 (hardback).

TOUR

The exhibition will tour to Millennium Gallery, Sheffield June 30 – Sept 23 2018.

For further Press information, please contact: Neil Evans, Media Relations Manager, National Portrait Gallery: Tel. 020 7 312 2452 (not for publication) / Email nevans@npg.org.uk

To download press releases and images, please go to: www.npg.org.uk/press

National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE, opening hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 10.00 – 18.00 (Gallery closure commences at 17.50) **Late Opening:** Thursday, Friday: 10.00 – 21.00 (Gallery closure commences at 8.50pm) **Nearest Underground:** Leicester Square/Charing Cross **General information:** 0207 306 0055 **Recorded information:** 020 7312 2463 **Website** www.npg.org.uk