

News Release

For Immediate Release Friday 7 May 2021

The Duchess of Cambridge visits National Portrait Gallery Archive to mark the launch of the *Hold Still* Publication

Final 100 Hold Still photographs to become part of the National Portrait Gallery Collection

The Duchess of Cambridge has today, (Friday 7 May), visited the National Portrait Gallery's Heinz Archive and Library to mark the release of the *Hold Still* publication, which is supported by Co-op. The Gallery also announced today that it is to acquire the digital images of all one hundred portraits featured in *the Hold Still* exhibition, preserving this unique collective portrait of the first nationwide lockdown for the future as part of the Gallery's national Collection. Her Royal Highness met with some of the *Hold Still* entrants whose photographs will become part of the National Portrait Gallery Collection and viewed other photographic portraits from the Gallery's extensive archive.

During her visit, The Duchess saw examples of other photographs from the Gallery's Collection which demonstrate how photography has been used since the 19th century to document individuals' experiences and key moments in our nation's social history. She also met with *Hold Still* entrants, Lotti Sofia, Niaz Maleknia and Claudia Burton, whose photographs feature in the book, to hear more about the stories behind their photographs and their love of photography. Prior to visiting the Gallery, Her Royal Highness attended The Royal London Hospital where she viewed a framed portrait of *Melanie, March 2020* by Johannah Churchill, which appears on the front cover of the *Hold Still* book. The portrait, which has been gifted to The Royal London by The Duchess and the NPG, will hang in the hospital's main corridor as a reminder of the phenomenal efforts of NHS staff throughout the pandemic. Further portraits will be given to locations around the UK for public display over the coming months.

To coincide with the release of the publication, 150 copies of the book have been hidden today in secret locations across the UK in a community activation supported by [The Book Fairies](#). Among the book fairies who have left a book to be discovered in place that is special to them are: 46 of the *Hold Still* participants, The Duchess of Cambridge, and her fellow *Hold Still* judges Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery; Lemn Sissay MBE, writer and poet; Ruth May, Chief Nursing Officer for England and Maryam Wahid, photographer. A selection of the *Hold Still* photographs will also be shown at London's iconic Piccadilly Lights screen, owned by Landsec, in Piccadilly Circus from the 10 – 16 May 2021.

Featuring an introduction from The Duchess of Cambridge, the *Hold Still* publication includes the one hundred portraits selected for the *Hold Still* exhibition from 31,598 submissions during the project's

six-week entry period. Focussed on three core themes – Helpers and Heroes, Your New Normal and Acts of Kindness – the images present a unique record of our shared and individual experiences during this extraordinary period of history, conveying humour and grief, creativity and kindness, tragedy and hope. The net proceeds from the sale of the book will be equally split to support the work of the National Portrait Gallery and Mind, the mental health charity (registered 219830).

Each of the one hundred photographs featured in the book is accompanied by the story behind the picture told through the words of the entrants themselves, offering a highly personal perspective on this unprecedented time. From virtual birthday parties, handmade rainbows and community clapping, to brave NHS staff, resilient keyworkers and people dealing with illness, isolation and loss.

The final selection of portraits were first unveiled in an [online exhibition](#) in September 2020, which has had over six million page views to date. The images were also exhibited on hundreds of billboard and poster sites in towns and cities across the UK in October last year, as part of a unique community exhibition, which came to life with the support of the Co-op. One of the portraits 'Melanie, March 2020', taken by Johannah Churchill, was recreated as a hand-painted mural in Manchester's Northern Quarter. Photographs of the nationwide exhibition will feature in the *Hold Still* publication. As will, a piece of poetic prose by judge Lemn Sissay reflecting on the entries and the judging experience.

The hardback book is available on the National Portrait Gallery [online shop](#) and in bookstores across the UK, priced at £24.95. The publication was designed and art directed by North Design.

Quotes:

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery London said: "We were honoured to welcome our Patron the Duchess of Cambridge to the National Portrait Gallery archive to mark the launch of the *Hold Still* book and the Gallery's acquisition of the final 100 portraits. The National Portrait Gallery tells the story of the people who have shaped and are shaping British history. *Hold Still* is an important part of this story and a unique record of our shared and individual experiences during the pandemic, which will now be preserved for future generations looking back on this extraordinary moment in our history."

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive, Mind said: "The coronavirus pandemic is a mental health emergency as well as a physical one. The devastating loss of life, the impact of lockdown, and any recession that lies ahead means there has never been a more crucial time to prioritise our mental health.

This inspiring collection of portraits illustrates the impact of the pandemic in all its complexity, but also how creativity, art and human connection can help us find meaning in unprecedented challenges. Thank you to everyone who submitted a portrait to tell such a moving and deeply human story of the pandemic. And to the National Portrait Gallery and The Duchess of Cambridge for choosing Mind as a beneficiary of a portion of the proceeds from the sales of this book."

Steve Murrells, CEO, Co-op Group, said: "Hold Still is an important publication that will serve as a poignant reminder of a year that changed all of our lives. It's heartening to think that people will be able to enjoy the portraits either by buying a copy of the book or by visiting the National Portrait Gallery where the Hold Still digital exhibition will now have its rightful permanent home. Co-op is incredibly proud to have played a role in bringing both the community exhibition, and now, the

book, to life and whilst the last twelve months have presented us with challenges on a scale we never imagined, Hold Still clearly shows the power of cooperation: cooperation in our homes, communities, care homes, hospitals, shops, schools and vaccination centres. With the pandemic having taken a huge toll on the mental health of our nation, I'm also delighted that some of the proceeds of the book will go to support MIND – an organisation that is very close to Co-op's heart, who carries out incredible work in local communities across the UK."

Last April, Co-op also launched 'Co-operate' to help connect vulnerable people to local and national support initiatives and has provided emergency relief funding to 4,500 community causes.

www.npgshop.org.uk/products/hold-still-hardcover

www.npg.org.uk/holdstill

www.coop.co.uk/co-operate

#HoldStill2020

ENDS

For further press information please contact:

Laura McKechnan, Senior Communications Manager Email: lmckechnan@npg.org.uk

Tel: +44 (0)7855 768 750

Aimi McNeill, Co-op Retail PR Manager Email: aimi.mcneill@coop.co.uk Tel: +44 (0) 7739 657 585

Kensington Palace – Email: kensington.palace@royal.uk Tel: +44 (0) 207 930 4832

Notes to Editors

Her Royal Highness has been Patron of the National Portrait Gallery since 2012.

About the National Portrait Gallery, London

Founded in 1856, the aim of the National Portrait Gallery, London is 'to promote through the medium of portraits the appreciation and understanding of the men and women who have made and are making British history and culture, and ... to promote the appreciation and understanding of portraiture in all media'. The Gallery holds the most extensive collection of portraits in the world, from Elizabeth I to Stormzy. Artists featured range from Holbein to Hockney, and the Collection includes work across all media, from painting and sculpture to photographs and video. In addition to painted portraits, drawings, sculptures and miniatures, the Gallery holds over 250,000 photographic images from the 1840s to the present day.

www.npg.org.uk

About Co-op

Co-op is one of the world's largest consumer co-operatives with interests across food, funerals, insurance, legal services and health. It has a clear purpose of championing a better way of doing business for you and your communities.

Owned by millions of UK consumers, the Co-op operates 2,600 food stores, over 1,000 funeral homes and it provides products to over 5,100 other stores, including those run by independent co-operative societies and through its wholesale business, Nisa Retail Limited.

Co-op provides local funding boosts and saves shoppers money through its re-launched membership scheme, and shares 2% of the money spent on Co-op branded products with community causes.

In a bid to reduce the damaging impact of Coronavirus measures on the mental wellbeing of millions, in April, Co-op launched 'Co-operate' – an online community centre which connects vulnerable people to local and national support initiatives and also to volunteers who are willing to run virtual events.

The platform also highlights the inspiring activity being carried out by the Co-op's army of 'Member Pioneers' – those colleagues who work with causes within their local communities who are concentrating all their efforts into helping others throughout the crisis.