



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

News release

Monday 18 September 2023

National Portrait Gallery launches new Little Explorers programme for under 5s

From *Tudors for Tots* to exhibition-inspired sessions, the *Little Explorers* programme – specifically designed for those aged 5 and under – invites families into the Gallery to play and learn amongst the world’s largest collection of portraits.



Photos Hayley Madden

Building on its new family offer, this September, the National Portrait Gallery launches *Little Explorers*, a free programme of multi-sensory activities designed for families with children aged five and under. Bespoke sessions, which will take place at the Gallery for the first time, provide opportunities for families to enjoy our bright new spaces – including the new Mildred and Simon Palley Learning Centre and Mildred Garden – and take part in activities that support physical, emotional and cognitive development.

Surrounded by famous faces from history, the free monthly workshops will take place during school term time and will be followed by light refreshments, creating opportunities for participating families to connect and meet. Through storytelling, singing and making activities, families will learn and play while exploring the Gallery and its Collection, with each hour-long session focused on a theme inspired by stories linked to science, literature, arts, history and society, as well as the Gallery’s temporary exhibition programme.

Developed in partnership with Westminster Family Hubs and Home-Start Westminster to engage local families, and created by exciting professional artists, storytellers, and musicians, the sessions encourage play and interaction between children, parents and carers.

Little Explorers: Tudors for Tots

Wednesday 20 September 2023, 11am – 12.30pm

The Law Photography Studio (Floor -2)

Meet storyteller Olivia Armstrong as she takes you and your little one on an interactive, sensory adventure into the world of the Tudors. Afterwards, get hands on making your own fun accessory to wear home.



Little Explorers: Caribbean Folktales

Wednesday 11 October 2023, 11am – 12.30pm

The Law Photography Studio (Floor -2)

Oct 11, 11am – 12.20pm

Travel across the Caribbean sea with Wendy Shearer as she delights you with traditional tales of cheeky tricksters and carnival. Get ready to jump into the stories with calypso music, colourful props and craft activities.

Little Explorers

Wednesday 1 November 2023, 11am – 12.30pm

The Law Photography Studio (Floor -2)

Join us in the Gallery for sensory storytelling, songs and dress-up, followed by a playful workshop in our Learning Centre.

Little Explorers

Wednesday 6 December 2023, 11am – 12.30pm

The Law Photography Studio (Floor -2)

Join us in the Gallery for sensory storytelling, songs and dress-up, followed by a playful workshop in our Learning Centre.

“Little Explorers is the latest addition to the National Portrait Gallery’s new public programme, which relaunched when our building opened following three years of closure on 22 June. As we seek to make our family friendly welcome and offer more relevant than ever to children of all ages, this new programme is vital for our very youngest audiences. Designed to enable learning through play and imagination, Little Explorers will unlock the creativity and confidence of families creating art and ideas together.”

Liz Smith

Director of Learning and Engagement, National Portrait Gallery

“The Mercers’ Company is delighted to support Little Explorers at the NPG. Little Explorers provides opportunities for families with young children to experience the Gallery and learn through creative activities. This grant aligns with work undertaken through our Early Years special initiative, which aims to build best practice within the Early Years sector and improve school readiness.”

Serena Hedley-Dent, Deputy Clerk and Head of Philanthropy

The Mercers’ Company

The *Little Explorers* programme has been supported by The Mercers’ Company and follows the Gallery’s successful *Inspiring People* transformation project, which physically culminated with the reopening of the National Portrait Gallery on 22 June 2023. *Inspiring People* was made possible by major grants from the Blavatnik Family Foundation and The National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, as well as major donations from the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Ross Foundation, Mildred and Simon Palley, Julia and Hans Rausing, the Clore Duffield Foundation, the David and Claudia Harding Foundation, Bjorn and Inger Saven, the Law Family Charitable Foundation, David and Molly Lowell Borthwick, the Deborah Loeb Brice Foundation and Art Fund.

ENDS

For further press information, images and interview requests please contact:

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Notes to editors

The National Portrait Gallery’s Schools hub launches on 5 September 2023 and can be accessed for free via:

[npg.org.uk/schools-hub](https://www.npg.org.uk/schools-hub)

National Portrait Gallery

Founded in 1856, the National Portrait Gallery tells the story of Britain through portraits, using art to bring history to life and explore living today. From global icons, to unsung heroes, our Collection is filled with the stories that have shaped, and continue to shape a nation. We celebrate the power of portraiture and offer encounters with some of the world’s greatest and most exciting new artists, promoting engagement with portraiture in all media to a wide-ranging public by conserving, growing and sharing the world’s largest collection of portraits.

www.npg.org.uk

The Mercers’ Company

The Mercers’ Company is a livery company focused on being a philanthropic force for good. It has a rich history dating back over 700 years with philanthropy as the common thread between its past, present and future.

Each year the Company, and the charities of which it is trustee, make grants of around £10 million through its philanthropic programmes which are focused on Young People & Education, Older People & Housing and Church &



Communities.

www.mercers.co.uk/philanthropy

The Blavatnik Family Foundation

The [Blavatnik Family Foundation](#) supports world-renowned educational, scientific, cultural, and charitable institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and across the globe. Led by Sir Leonard Blavatnik, founder and chairman of Access Industries, the Foundation advances and promotes innovation, discovery, and creativity to benefit the whole of society. Over the past decade, the Foundation has contributed more than \$1 billion to over 250 organizations.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we Inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk.

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £46 billion for projects and more than 670,000 grants have been awarded across the UK. More than £30 million raised each week goes to good causes across the UK.

The Garfield Weston Foundation

Established in 1958, the Garfield Weston Foundation is a family-founded charitable grant-making trust, which gives away around £90 million a year to charities across the UK.

Each year the Foundation gives away its income and donations have continued to grow. Since it was established, it has donated over £1.4 billion, of which over half has been given away in the past 10 years alone. In the most recent financial year, the Foundation gave away nearly £90 million to over 1,980 charities across the UK.

The Ross Foundation

The Ross Foundation was created in 2007 with a core mission to help children and young people discover their strengths by offering them a wide range of world-class educational opportunities. We support organisations that inspire young people and encourage them to take the chance to embrace new skills and passion.