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## Milestone photographic portraits of the Royal Family to go on show in Edinburgh

### Royal Portraits: A Century of Photography

The King's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse

28 February – 7 September 2025

A photograph of His Majesty The King on the verge of adulthood in Balmoral, a series marking The Princess Royal's 21st birthday, and the earliest surviving colour photographic print of a member of the Royal Family are among the highlights of a major exhibition opening at The King's Gallery, Edinburgh this February.

**Royal Portraits: A Century of Photography** will chart the evolution of royal portrait photography from the 1920s to the present day, revealing the stories behind the creation of some of the most iconic images of the Royal Family.



Norman Parkinson, *Princess Anne's 21st birthday*, 1971

Bringing together **more than 90 photographic prints, proofs and documents** from the Royal Collection and the Royal Archives, the exhibition – which follows a successful run in London – will also consider the artistic and technological advances in photography as it evolved into a recognised art form.

Alessandro Nasini, curator of *Royal Portraits: A Century of Photography*, said: 'The Royal Collection holds some of the most enduring photographs ever taken of the Royal Family, each one captured by the most celebrated portrait photographers of the past hundred years – from **Cecil Beaton** and **Norman Parkinson** to **Annie Leibovitz** and **Rankin**.

'Alongside these beautiful vintage prints, many of which are which are being shown in Scotland for the first time, we are excited to share archival correspondence, photographers' handwritten annotations and unreleased proofs that **lift the curtain on the process of commissioning, sitting for, and selecting royal portraits**. We hope visitors will enjoy going behind the scenes to discover how these unforgettable royal images were made.'

Photographs taken to mark milestone birthdays of members of the Royal Family are among the star works in the exhibition, including images from the famed 1971 series taken by **Norman Parkinson** to mark **Princess Anne's** 21st birthday. The 'coming of age' portraits reveal a sophisticated and stylish woman as she interacts with her surroundings of the gardens of Frogmore House, or stands in front of a fantastical painted scene reminiscent of a Scottish landscape, featuring a **galloping white unicorn bearing her royal standard**.

Another highlight will be a portrait of **The King when Prince of Wales by Godfrey Argent**, released to mark his 18th birthday in 1966. Taken in the library of Balmoral Castle,

the photograph shows the young prince smiling while standing in a tweed jacket and a Balmoral tartan kilt.

Visitors will see glamorous images from the first half of the 20th century, taken by some of the most respected photographers of the era. All of the photographs in the exhibition are vintage prints – the original works produced by the photographer – and the earliest works date from the 1920s and 30s, the golden age of the society photographer. A highlight will be the **earliest surviving photographic print** of a member of the Royal Family to be produced in colour. Taken by **Madame Yevonde**, a pioneer of colour photography, the photograph shows Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester (sister-in-law to King George VI and Edward VIII) on her wedding day in 1935.

Another example is an ethereal photograph of **Queen Elizabeth II as a princess**, taken by **Yousuf Karsh** in 1951. Arriving in Ottawa, Canada, in 1924 as a refugee from Armenia, Karsh went on to earn a worldwide reputation for his use of dramatic lighting and ability to capture his sitters' character and dignity.

In the mid-20th century, no royal photographer had a greater impact on shaping the monarchy's public image than **Cecil Beaton**. The exhibition will present some of Beaton's most memorable photographs, taken over six decades. These include Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother's famed 1939 shoot in the Buckingham Palace Gardens, dressed in gowns designed by Norman Hartnell, and Beaton's original Coronation portraits of Queen Elizabeth II – arguably the most prestigious photography commission of the century.

Close relationships between royal sitters and photographers will unfold throughout the exhibition, seen most clearly through the lens of **Lord Snowdon, born Antony Armstrong-Jones**. One of the most sought-after photographers of the 1950s, Snowdon's unpretentious style soon attracted the attention of the Royal Family, and he became a member of the family himself when he married Princess Margaret in 1960. His remarkably intimate portraits of the Princess, taken both before and during their marriage, hint at the depths of trust and collaboration between them.

The bold and colourful later photographs in the exhibition will demonstrate the extraordinary variety, power, and at times playfulness of royal portrait photography over the past four decades. These works range from **Andy Warhol's** diamond-dust-sprinkled screenprint of Queen Elizabeth II to well-known photographs by **David Bailey, Nick Knight, Annie Leibovitz** and more. The exhibition concludes with the official Coronation portraits taken by **Hugo Burnand** in May 2023.

Following a successful trial in 2024, The King's Gallery will continue to offer £1 tickets to this exhibition for visitors receiving Universal Credit and other named benefits. Other concessionary rates are available, including discounted tickets for Young People, half-price entry for children (with under-fives free), and the option to convert standard tickets bought directly from Royal Collection Trust into a 1-Year Pass for unlimited re-entry for 12 months.

**Ends**

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**Royal Portraits: A Century of Photography is at The King's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, 28 February – 7 September 2025.**

**A selection of images is available via [Dropbox](#). For further information, please contact the Royal Collection Trust Press Office, +44 (0)20 7839 1377, [press@rct.uk](mailto:press@rct.uk).**

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T. +44 (0)20 7839 1377, [press@rct.uk](mailto:press@rct.uk), [www.rct.uk](http://www.rct.uk)**

**Visitor information and tickets for The King's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse: [www.rct.uk](http://www.rct.uk), T. +44 (0)303 123 7306. The King's Gallery is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, changing to seven-day opening from 1 April until the end of the exhibition run on 7 September 2025.**

**Further details about the £1 ticket scheme can be found [here](#). £1 tickets are available for those receiving Universal Credit and other named benefits, for the full duration of *Royal Portraits: A Century of Photography* at The King's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse.**

**Instagram: [@royalcollectiontrust](#) Facebook: [@royalcollectiontrust](#) X: [@RCT](#)**

### **Notes to Editors**

**Royal Collection Trust** is a charity caring for the Royal Collection and welcoming visitors to the royal palaces. We bring our shared history to life through world-class experiences that involve and inspire people, wherever they are. Income from tickets and retail sales helps us to conserve the Collection so that it can be enjoyed by everyone for generations to come.

**The Royal Collection** is one of the world's great art collections, held in trust by The King for his successors and the nation. With over a million objects, from paintings, drawings and books to sculpture, furniture and jewellery, it is a unique record of the tastes of British kings and queens over the past 500 years, with many items still used today for their original purpose. The Collection can be seen in palaces, museums and galleries across the UK and around the world, and can be explored online at [www.rct.uk](http://www.rct.uk).

Admission to The King's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse is managed by The Royal Collection Trust, a registered charity in England and Wales (1016972) and in Scotland (SCO39772).