



The Art and Majesty of the Tudor Dynasty to be exhibited at the Legion of Honor

The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England

June 24 – September 24, 2023

SAN FRANCISCO – The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (The Museums) are proud to present The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England, the first major exhibition in the United States of portraiture and decorative arts of the Tudor courts.

From King Henry VII's usurpation of the English throne in 1485, to the death of his granddaughter Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, the Tudor monarchs used art to establish power and legitimize their reigns. The Legion of Honor's presentation, the sole West Coast venue for the exhibition, will showcase a new exhibition design and chronological visual narrative, tracing the development of art across the reigns of the five Tudor monarchs and their individual styles.

"Thanks to Hollywood movies and TV dramas like *The Tudors*, many Americans have heard of King Henry VIII and his six wives, as well as the "Virgin Queen" Elizabeth I, but few may be aware of the distinctive art and visual propaganda that was central to the splendor and drama of the Tudor court," said Thomas P. Campbell, Director

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Press Release

and CEO of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. "Now, in the first exhibition of its kind in the US, *The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England* reunites scores of sumptuous paintings, precious jewels, rich tapestries and rare artifacts from collections around the world to bring the Tudor dynasty vividly to life—from the bloody founding of the dynasty in 1485 by Henry VII on the fields of Bosworth, to the final moments of Queen Elizabeth in 1603."

The Legion of Honor's presentation will include works from the museum's collection, including a late 16th century panel painting. Newly attributed to artist Robert Peake by Fine Arts Museums conservators, this work recently underwent an extensive study in preparation for the exhibition. The sitter, previously unknown, has been definitively identified as Frances Walsingham—the daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's spymaster—during a technical investigation. The digital reconstruction of the original cartellino inscription reads: "The Ladie Sidney daughter/ to Secretarye Walsingham." Another museum collection piece that will be on view is a selection of decorated oak panels commissioned by Sir Edward Wotton, Treasurer of Calais and Privy Councillor to Edward VI, from his 16th century estate Boughton Place, Kent. Their classical ornament shows the influence of the Renaissance in rural England. Newly conserved, they will go on display for the first time since they were acquired by the Museums in the 1980s.

Other key works include tapestries commissioned or acquired by Henry VII and Henry VIII. Tapestries were the glory of the Tudor palaces, adorning the walls with vibrant color and the glint of gilt thread representing the power and prestige of the monarchy. They were the most expensive works of art created at this time and Henry VIII owned the enormous number of 2500 examples to furnish his many palaces. A Flemish tapestry depicting a scene from the story of David and Bathsheba demonstrates the cosmopolitan taste and sophistication of Henry VIII's court.

"The Tudors ushered in the English Renaissance, which drew inspiration from humanism, antiquity, and observation of the natural world," said Martin Chapman, Curator in Charge of European Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. "Unique to the presentation at the Legion of Honor are a portrait of Henry VIII by Hans Holbein the Younger from the Palazzo Barberini in Rome and a portrait of Elizabeth I by Nicholas Hilliard from a private collection in England, works by two of the most significant painters patronized by the Tudors."

While the Tudor period was marked by political and religious strife, the arts flourished for purposes of propaganda for the newly minted dynasty. With a chronological narrative, each section of the exhibition is devoted to highlighting each monarch's reign and personality through an extraordinary range of sumptuous objects: Henry VII (reigned 1485–1509),

his son Henry VIII (1509–1547), and Henry VIII's three children Edward VI (r. 1547–1553), Mary I (r. 1553–1558), and Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603). Works by Florentine sculptors, German painters, Flemish weavers, and European goldsmiths and printers from this period are presented alongside objects made by English artists and craftspeople, demonstrating both the cosmopolitanism of the English court and the emergence of distinctly English artistic styles by the end of the sixteenth century.

Henry VII founded the Tudor dynasty when he seized the crown, concluding the Wars of the Roses. The dynasty was strengthened through the cultivation of European alliances by means of marriage, including Henry VII's marriage to Elizabeth of York (ending the rivalry between the royal houses of Lancaster and York), and after his death, his son Henry VIII's marriage to Spanish princess Katherine of Aragon, and his two daughters' marriages to the kings of Scotland and



France. Throughout his reign Henry VII invested in art as a means of projecting kingly splendor. A velvet and cloth-of-gold clerical vestment, or cope, commissioned for his chapel, is among the most splendid textiles in the exhibition.

Henry VIII, who inherited a full treasury upon his succession, built numerous palaces and supported scholars and artists such as German painter Hans Holbein the Younger, one of the most successful portraitists and designers of the sixteenth century. In response to the pope's refusal to grant him a divorce from Katherine of Aragon, Henry severed England's ties to the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, establishing the Church of England with the monarch as its head. Key objects in the section of the exhibition devoted to Henry VIII's reign include a Hans Holbein portrait of Henry VIII's third wife Jane Seymour; the king's armor garniture from the Royal Armoury at Greenwich; and a portrait bust of Bishop John Fisher, an influential English clergyman, by the Italian sculptor Pietro Torrigiano.

The reign of boy-king Edward VI brought the development of more radical Protestantism in England, including the publication of the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549. During the brief reign of Edward's sister Mary I, England was reconciled with the Roman Catholic Church and more than 280 Protestants were burned at the stake for heresy. Highlights of a section devoted to this time period include a Holbein portrait of Edward as a child and Henry's longed-for heir, a portrait of Edward as king by William Scrots, and a portrait medal depicting Mary I in profile.

Under Elizabeth I, whose reign would be remembered as a golden age, distinctively English styles of painting, architecture, and decorative arts emerged. Known variously as the Virgin Queen, Good Queen Bess, and Gloriana, her rule was marked by Protestant religious policies, economic prosperity, pirating of Spanish ships in the Americas, and the maturation of English art and culture, like the sonnets and plays of William Shakespeare. Among the many notable works from her reign in the exhibition are the recognizable Hardwick Portrait (ca. 1590–1599) and the Heneage Jewel, one of the most splendid surviving Elizabethan jewels depicting the queen in profile and Noah's ark weathering stormy seas.

The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England will be on view from June 24 through September 24, 2023, at the Legion of Honor museum in San Francisco. The Legion of Honor's presentation is organized by Martin Chapman, Curator in Charge of European Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

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Visiting \ Legion of Honor

Lincoln Park, 100 34th Avenue, San Francisco. Open Tuesdays–Sundays, 9:30 am–5:15 pm.

Closed most Mondays; open select holidays.

Programming

A robust schedule of free public programs will support the exhibition throughout the summer, including exhibition tours with curators; calligraphy demonstrations; dance performances by the Guild of St. George, which has reconstructed the court dances of the Renaissance; and music performances by the San Francisco Renaissance Voices, an Early Music Assemblé that will perform works from the period. Other events include English architecture historian Simon Thurley in conversation with FAMSF director Tom Campbell and costume historian Noel Gielegem will demonstrate how to make and wear a ruff collar, widely seen in portraits from the era. Certain days will be set aside for visitors to wear period dress and discounted admission will be offered to costume guild and drag groups.

Ticketing

More information regarding tickets can be found at famsf.org/visit-us/.

Exhibition Organization

This exhibition is organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Cleveland Museum of Art, in collaboration with the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. The Legion of Honor's presentation is organized by Martin Chapman, Curator in Charge of European Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. The Presenting Sponsor is John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn. Lead Sponsors are Margaret and William R. Hearst III, and Barbara A. Wolfe. Major Support is provided by The Bernard Osher Foundation. Generous support is provided by Marion M. Cope, and Gretchen B. Kimball. Additional Support is provided by Edina Jennison, The Diana Dollar Knowles Fund, The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Cathy and Howard Moreland, and Heather Preston, M.D. This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

About the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, comprising the de Young in Golden Gate Park and the Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park, are the largest public arts institution in San Francisco.

The Legion of Honor was inspired by the French pavilion at San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 and, like that structure, was modeled after the neoclassical Palais de la Légion d'Honneur, in Paris. The museum, designed by George Applegarth, opened in 1924 on a bluff in Lincoln Park overlooking the Golden Gate. It offers unique insight into the art historical, political, and social movements of the previous 4,000 years of human history, with holdings including European painting, sculpture, and decorative arts; ancient art from the Mediterranean basin; and the largest collection of works on paper in the American West.

The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco respectfully acknowledge the Ramaytush Ohlone, the original inhabitants of what is now the San Francisco Peninsula, and acknowledge that the Greater Bay Area is the ancestral territory of the Miwok, Yokuts, Patwin, and other Ohlone. Indigenous communities have lived in and moved through this place over hundreds of generations, and Indigenous peoples from many nations make their home in this region today. Please join us in recognizing and honoring their ancestors, descendants, elders, and communities.

Image credits: Associated with Nicholas Hilliard, "Queen Elizabeth I", c. 1575; National Portrait Gallery, London © National Portrait Gallery, London.; "Edward VI as a Child", Artist: Hans Holbein the Younger (German, 1497/1498 - 1543), probably 1538, Oil on wood, Framed: 31 1/2 x 27 x 4 in. (80.01 x 68.58 x 10.16 cm), 22 3/8 x 17 5/16 in. (56.833 x 43.974 cm), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, 1937.1.64, Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington.; Hans Holbein the Younger (German, 1497-1543) Portrait of Henry VIII, 1540, Oil on wood, 88.5X 74.5 cm, Palazzo Barberini, courtesy of the Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica, Rome (MIC) - Biblioteca Hertziana, Istituzione Max Planck per la storia dell'arte/Enrico Fontolan.; Possibly Jan Van Roome, "The Division of the Booty from David and Batsheba", Probably Brussels, ca. 1526-28, Wool (warp), wool, silk, silver, and gilded silver metal-wrapped threads (wefts) 179 ¼ x 232 ¾ in., Musée national de la renaissance, Écouen, E.Cl.1617, Photo: Gérard Blot. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY