



Portraits of Dogs: From Gainsborough to Hockney

29 March – 15 October 2023

#WallaceWoofs

A much anticipated and truly magnificent exhibition of dog portraits – postponed due to the pandemic in 2020 – will finally go on display at The Wallace Collection next year (29 March – 15 October 2023).

Portraits of Dogs: From Gainsborough to Hockney explores our devotion to four-legged friends across the centuries. Through carefully selected paintings, sculptures, drawings, works of art and even taxidermy, the exhibition highlights the unique bond between humans and their canine companions.

Dog portraiture developed as an artistic genre contemporaneously with its human counterpart – dogs are represented in the earliest cave paintings alongside humans – and it flourished, particularly in Britain, from the seventeenth century onwards. More than any other nationality perhaps, the British have both commissioned and collected portraits of dogs.

This penchant was a guiding principle in selecting artworks for this exhibition, with nearly all loans coming from collections in the United Kingdom. Works were also deliberately chosen for their lack of human presence. Despite this absence, the commissioned portraits reveal as much about the owners as they do about the dogs themselves, the personality of the owner reflected in the character of their beloved pet. In assembling this exhibition, the Wallace Collection's Director, Dr Xavier Bray – himself the proud owner of two pugs Bluebell and her son, Winston – was fortunate to have an abundance of examples from which to choose:

“The idea of curating an exhibition of dog portraiture has been in the pipeline for a long time and, fortunately, the Wallace Collection lends itself perfectly to the staging of such an exhibition. Two of our most popular paintings are seminal dog portraits, Rosa Bonheur’s Brizo, A Shepherd’s Dog (1864) and Edwin Landseer’s Doubtful Crumbs (1858–9).

They represent two very contrasting approaches to the art of dog portraiture. Bonheur's portrait is a superbly lifelike and intimate portrayal of her French otterhound, Brizo. By contrast, Landseer is more interested in introducing a biblical parable into his portrayal, exemplifying the 19th century urge to moralise through dog portraiture. In his work, a small street terrier waits for the 'crumbs' from the St Bernard who falls asleep while feasting in his warm kennel – a Victorian moral of the rewards that await in heaven for the meek amongst us."

Bringing over 50 works of art to Hertford House, *Portraits of Dogs* presents a broad range of portraiture showing dogs in all their different shapes and sizes, with each painter or sculptor challenging themselves how best to represent mankind's best, faithful and fearless friend.

The earliest example will be a late first-century Roman marble sculpture of two greyhounds, on loan from the British Museum. Known as the *Townley Greyhounds*, it depicts an emotional connection between the pair – which is perhaps surprising given its early date – and is possibly the earliest representation of the 'Vertragus' dog, a Celtic breed thought to be the antecedent of the greyhound and greatly prized by the Romans for their prowess as sighthounds.

Another highlight of the exhibition is a metalpoint drawing made in c. 1490–95 (National Galleries of Scotland) by Leonardo da Vinci, which focuses intently on a left forepaw, possibly that of a deerhound. Using both sides of the sheet, he observes the paw and draws our attention to the anatomy of the dog's paw, the articulation of the tendons, the way the two sharp front claws are grouped closely together and the soft, hairless shock-absorbing pads beneath.

The connection between dogs and royalty also forms a key part of the exhibition, not least Queen Victoria's love for spaniels. From a touching portrait of her Sussex spaniel, Tilco, painted by Landseer in 1838 (National Trust), to pencil and watercolour sketches she made of her other dogs (Royal Collection Trust).

Just as Queen Victoria did on an amateur basis, professional artists are also wont to depict their own pooches and those of their closest friends and the exhibition presents some charming examples, from Thomas Gainsborough's *Tristram and Fox*, dated c. 1775–85 (Tate), which hung over the fireplace of the artist's home, to James Ward's *Portrait of Fanny, A Favourite Dog*, dated 1822 (Sir John Soane's Museum).

Finally, a suite of vivid paintings from 1995 share a series of affectionate vignettes of David Hockney's dachshunds, Stanley and Boodgie. They are a touching testament to the role the dogs played in his life from the moment he adopted them in 1987. By portraying the two dogs sleeping, or at rest on their vibrantly coloured cushion, Hockney creates a strong sense of intimacy and immediacy.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a lavishly illustrated 155-page catalogue: *Faithful and Fearless: Portraits of Dogs*.

[HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES FOR MEDIA USE CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE](#)

Rosa Bonheur, *Brizo, A Shepherd's Dog*, 1864 (P365) © The Wallace Collection

Edwin Landseer, *Hector, Nero and Dash with the Parrot Lory*, 1838 Royal Collection Trust © His Majesty King Charles III 2022

Studies of a Dog's Paw. Leonardo da Vinci. National Galleries of Scotland. Purchased by Private Treaty Sale with the aid of the Art Fund 1991 © National Galleries of Scotland

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About the Wallace Collection

As one of Britain's preeminent cultural institutions, the Wallace Collection is home to one of the most significant ensembles of fine and decorative arts in the world. Highlights include oil paintings from the fourteenth to the late nineteenth centuries by artists such as Titian, Velazquez, Rubens and Van Dyck; princely arms and armour; and one of the finest collections of eighteenth-century French paintings and decorative arts. Visitors can also enjoy superb medieval

and Renaissance objects, including Limoges enamel, maiolica, glass and bronzes. Displayed at Hertford House, former home to Sir Richard and Lady Wallace, this outstanding collection is displayed in a manner designed to evoke the lives and tastes of its founders, creating a special ambiance that remains an essential part of its charm. www.wallacecollection.org. The Wallace Collection is open daily, 10.00-17.00.

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