



Queen Elizabeth II by Cecil Beaton: A Diamond Jubilee Celebration

8 February – 22 April 2012

To celebrate The Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the V&A is holding an exhibition of portraits of Her Majesty by photographer Cecil Beaton (1904-1980). Presenting highlights of the V&A's collection of Beaton's royal photography, *Queen Elizabeth II by Cecil Beaton: A Diamond Jubilee Celebration* will depict The Queen in her roles as princess, monarch and mother and include a number of photographs never before seen, as well as excerpts from Beaton's diaries and letters.

Distinguished photographer, designer and avid diarist, Beaton's royal portraits were among the most widely published photographs of the 20th century. The exhibition will explore Beaton's long relationship with Queen Elizabeth II, who was a teenage princess when she first sat for Beaton in 1942. Over the next three decades, Beaton photographed The Queen on many significant occasions including her Coronation Day. The exhibition coincides with the 60th anniversary of her accession to the throne, marking her Diamond Jubilee.

The exhibition will feature nearly 100 portraits, from wartime photographs of Princess Elizabeth with her family, to tender images of The Queen with her own young children and official portraits that convey the magnitude of her role as Britain's monarch. It will show elegant and highly-staged photographs alongside informal moments of the Royal Family at home, interspersed with film and radio footage from the time.

Extracts from Beaton's diaries and letters will reveal an insight into the working practice of a royal sitting, from the intense planning beforehand to conversations with The Queen and the pressures of achieving the perfect portrait. A selection of Beaton's original contact prints, from which the Palace chose the images released to the media, will be on display for the first time with volumes of press cuttings. The exhibition will also demonstrate how Beaton controlled the use of his photographs, revealing the press embargo, cropping instructions and notes on the sitting scribed on the reverse of his extensively published image of The Queen and newborn Prince Andrew from March 1960.

The exhibition is arranged in five sections documenting important sittings and charting the shift in Beaton's photographic style, from his early Rococo-inspired portraits to a starker approach in the 1960s. One section will showcase portraits of Beaton himself by his contemporaries including Curtis Moffat, Irving Penn and David Bailey.

A version of the exhibition will open in the McManus Gallery in Dundee in September 2011 and will tour around the UK to Leeds City Museum, Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery and Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

- The exhibition will take place in the V&A's Porter Gallery
- The V&A is open daily from 10.00 – 17.45 and until 22.00 every Friday
- The exhibition curator is Susanna Brown, Curator of Photographs at the V&A
- The V&A has the oldest museum photography collection in the world and holds the UK's national collection of photography. The Cecil Beaton collection of royal portraits was bequeathed to the V&A in 1987. It includes 18,000 original prints, transparencies and negatives and 45 volumes of press cuttings.

Ticket Information

Tickets: £6

For advance bookings visit www.vam.ac.uk (booking fee applies) or call 020 7907 7073

Exhibition Publication

V&A Publishing has produced a hardback book to accompany the exhibition authored by Susanna Brown, with contributions from Sir Roy Strong and Mario Testino. For further press information about the book, contact Julie Chan on 020 7942 2701 or email j.chan@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

Exhibition Merchandise

There will be a V&A Shop range to coincide with the exhibition. For press information on merchandise contact Samantha Safer on 020 7942 2878 or email s.safer@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

For further press information about the exhibition, contact Zoë Franklin or Amelia MacGregor on 020 7942 2497 / 2502 or z.franklin@vam.ac.uk / a.macgregor@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

A selection of high resolution images are available to download at pressimages.vam.ac.uk

