

# Fashion on show at Palace of Holyroodhouse



*Hans Holbein the Younger, 'William Parr, later Marquess of Northampton', c.1538-42. Royal Collection Trust/ (C) Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2013.*

**Early royal fashion will go on show next month at Holyrood Palace, showing that men are just as vain when it comes to dressing. The designs for royal men were drawn up apparently to show off their shoulders and long legs.**

For the Tudor and Stuart elite, luxurious clothing was an essential element of court life. Garments and accessories – and the way in which they were worn – conveyed important messages about wealth, gender, age, social position, marital status and religion. Through the evidence of portraiture, ***In Fine Style: The Art of Tudor and Stuart Fashion*** at **The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse** traces changing tastes in fashionable attire in the 16th and 17th centuries. Using paintings, drawings and jewellery from the Royal Collection, and rare surviving examples of clothing and accessories, it explores the style of the rich and famous of the Tudor and Stuart periods.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, entry to the inner circle at court, and subsequent political and professional success, was largely driven by personal appearance. A key obligation for the courtier was to reflect the glory of the monarch through splendid attire, and sartorial competition led to an insatiable search for the novel to distinguish the wearer from their rivals.



Attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, □'Anne of

Denmark', 1614. Royal Collection Trust/ (C) Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2013.

Both Henry VIII and Elizabeth I enforced laws dictating the fabrics, colours and types of garment that could be worn at each level of society. 'Cloth of gold' (which incorporated gold-wrapped thread), crimson-dyed fabrics and certain types of fur were reserved for those of the highest status. On the preparatory drawing for his portrait of William Parr (c.1538–42) Hans Holbein the Younger, 'King's Painter' to Henry VIII, notes that the sitter wore a gown of purple velvet. This fabric was usually reserved for royalty, thus reflecting Parr's standing in the royal household as captain of the Gentleman Pensioners.

Costume and paintings were frequently commissioned to mark important events, such as marriage or elevation to a knightly order. In many cases, the clothing worn by the sitter was more costly than the painting itself. In 1632 Charles I paid the leading court artist Sir Anthony van Dyck £100 for a portrait of the royal family, while spending £5,000 a year on clothing (more than £400,000 today). The cost arose from the labour-intensive and time-consuming production methods (creating a piece of white linen from flax took several months and included over 20 processes) and the price of raw materials, such as pure gold and silver bullion. Handmade lace was frequently used to decorate garments and could be one of the most costly elements of an outfit.

Monarchs and their court were admired for their fashion sense and innovative style. Henry VIII's Spanish consort, Catherine of Aragon, is credited with popularising blackwork embroidery. The technique, which creates geometric or naturalistic designs in black silk on white linen, can be seen in a 16th-century portrait of Catherine. In 1666 Charles II introduced a new fashion for men – a long vest worn under a coat, instead of a short doublet and cloak – which was the precursor of the three-piece suit. The King is wearing the

new style in *Charles II presented with a pineapple, c.1675.*

The trend spread so quickly that three weeks later the diarist Samuel Pepys recorded wearing his own version.



Embroidered gloves, c.1595-1605 □ Credit: Courtesy The Glove Collection Trust.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, men's clothing tended to emphasise features associated with masculinity, such as broad shoulders and long muscular legs. Male fashions matched those of women in the luxuriousness of materials and complexity of design, and some elements of masculine dress were adopted by women. Samuel Cooper's miniature of Frances Teresa Stuart (c.1663) shows the sitter attired in an elaborate riding habit inspired by the male coat which flared from the waist and reached the knee. By 1620 the matter of women wearing doublet-style bodices, hats and male hairstyles was of sufficient concern to be raised in church sermons under the express wish of James VI and I.

High-maintenance and impractical clothing conveyed a clear message to the viewer that the subject of the portrait enjoyed a privileged lifestyle, and had spare time to devote to the pursuit of fashion and the lengthy process of dressing. For example, the elaborate Elizabethan ruff, like that seen in Nicholas Hilliard's miniature of Elizabeth I (c.1595–1600), was made of a complex arrangement of layers and pleats, and required setting and starching on a weekly basis. Similarly, the copious folds of Anne of Denmark's elaborate skirt in Marcus Gheeraerts' portrait (1614) would have needed daily pinning into place. The fashion for extending the fingers of gloves beyond the fingertips was a trend associated with Elizabeth I, who was particularly proud of her long, graceful fingers. It remained popular not only because of its royal origins, but also because long-fingered gloves in pale colours signalled that the sitter was of a high status and did not undertake any manual work.

Just as today, the fashion accessories of the Tudor and Stuart period ranged from the quirky – a purse in the shape of a frog – to the ostentatious. Renaissance jewellery was often full of symbolism, including classical or mythological figures, and set with stones thought to hold magical properties. One of the most important early jewels in the Royal Collection is the famous Darnley or Lennox Jewel – an exquisite gold heart-shaped locket set with rubies, emeralds and diamonds. It is thought to have been commissioned in the late 16th century by Lady Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox, in memory of her husband the Earl of Lennox and Regent of Scotland. Its design incorporates a serpent entwined around the Tree of Life and skull cameos, serving as a memento mori (a reminder of death).

Allegorical symbols inside the Jewel, such as a phoenix rising, allude to the Countess's hopes for the legacy of her family, perhaps through her grandson, born to Lord Darnley and Mary, Queen of Scots, who later became James VI and I.

**The exhibition *In Fine Style: The Art of Tudor and Stuart Fashion* is at The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, 14 March – 20 July 2014.**

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**Tickets and visitor information: +44 (0)131 556 5100.**

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