

Harry Benson's portrait of the Queen on view at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery



It is an exciting day at The Scottish National Portrait Gallery today. The gallery commissioned the renowned Scottish photographer Harry Benson CBE to create a new portrait of Her Majesty The Queen, and it's ready now.

The photograph was unveiled today, Tuesday 1 July 2014, and it depicts Her Majesty in the private study at Buckingham Palace where she holds her weekly audience with her prime ministers: Her Majesty wears a gold and diamond brooch featuring thistles, Scotland's national emblem.

✘ Born in Glasgow, Harry Benson moved early in his career to the competitive world of Fleet Street newspapers, working first for the Daily Sketch and the Daily Express. He then took photographs for LIFE Magazine and Vanity Fair. His reputation was secured 50 years ago when he created a seminal series of photographs of The Beatles on their first international tour. He has photographed every American president since Eisenhower and has created some truly iconic images, including the famous photograph of the Reagans dancing at the White House. A hugely successful retrospective of his work was held at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in 2006.

✘ Mr Benson commented on the commission:- "To have been asked by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery to photograph Her Majesty The Queen for an official portrait is truly a highlight of my career. I first photographed Her Majesty in Scotland opening a coal mine in 1957, and thereafter visiting

towns in Lanarkshire, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and the Western Highlands, and later in London at the opening of Parliament ... It was always an honour and a privilege, but the most memorable was when I had the opportunity to take an official portrait in Buckingham Palace for the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. I was given the opportunity of selecting the colour and dress that The Queen would wear for the portrait. My teachers at the Eastwood School in Glasgow would be amazed!"

Christopher Baker, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, added "We are delighted with this new portrait, which is the first the Scottish National Portrait Gallery has commissioned of The Queen. It is also an especially fitting way of marking a key moment in Harry Benson's distinguished career, as 2014 is the 50th anniversary of his great portraits of The Beatles, which established his reputation as one of the finest modern photographers. Harry Benson's portrait of Her Majesty is a respectful and thoughtful work, which will, I am confident, prove extremely popular."

This commission has been supported by the Friends of the National Galleries of Scotland.