

New exhibition as the King's Gallery opens

The King's Gallery is open with a new exhibition exploring life in 18th century Britain through the fashions of the day.

The gallery has been closed since October 2022 for maintenance works and is now renamed after the coronation of King Charles.

Style & Society: Dressing the Georgians brings together around 100 works from the Royal Collection a small manageable exhibition up on the first floor. The basis of the exhibition is to show what people wore in real life, by displaying some clothing and accessories and how they were portrayed in paintings.

Anna Reynolds the curator of the exhibition gave us an overview of the exhibition, but particularly two paintings shown side by side at the start of the chronological display which show off the difference between fashion and court dress. She said: "In centuries past, it had typically been the King and his court, his courtiers, his consort or mistresses, who had set the fashions and that had then trickled down to the rest of society. That had been established all the way back to Henry VIII but in the 18th century, we start to see a bit of a reversal of that and the court became very old fashioned. So tastemakers are actually increasingly drawn from lower down the social scale. In one painting the wedding portrait Queen Charlotte is wearing a hooped petticoat which had long been dropped on the streets of London. The painting alongside shows St James' Park and that is real fashion which is happening in

the new social spaces, parks, theatres, coffee houses, that's where the fashions were being set. So there is a divergence between court and on the street style."



The painting on the right shows Queen Charlotte in a hooped petticoat at a wedding and the painting on the left shows the fashion of the day in St James' Park. The newly named King's Gallery opens after more than a year with an exhibition Style and Society: Dressing the Georgians PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter

Some of the key messages that Ms Reynolds would like to get across include appreciation of the craftsmanship that goes into making clothes in the 18th century. She said: "We've got lace lappets, which are long streamers attached to a woman's cap, the very finest lace during this period, just making one of these might take one lacemaker a year. Textiles were so appreciated they were often pleated rather than cut so that they could be reused. That is another really important message that I think really resonates with us today is about sustainability and ethical fashion, reusing and recycling. The Georgians were really interested in that as well."

There is a beautiful cotton white and gold gown on show although the curator explained this is more properly called a cotton sack. She said that cotton is a fabric which really rises in the 18th century. She explained that all materials at this time were natural and derived from animal or plant sources such as silk, wool or linen but "cotton is the new kid on the block as it were. It could be dyed or washed so it was really special".

The huge painting of George IV by Sir David Wilkie was painted after the first visit by a reigning monarch to Scotland in almost two centuries. The 1822 visit is often talked about in the capital and a statue of the king is on George Street. The King is shown in full Highland dress of Royal Stewart tartan making a statement of the accord between Scotland and England as he was heir to both the Hanoverians and Jacobites after more than a century of conflict.

This period was all about hair and accessories. Men shaved their hair off and wore elaborate wigs instead, while women held fans to reveal and conceal behind. Shoes were made of fabric as most nobility used carriages and never had to worry about puddles.



The newly named King's Gallery opens after more than a year with an exhibition Style and Society: Dressing the Georgians
PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter

The gallery, formerly the Queen's Gallery, opened in 2002 and this is the 40th exhibition shown there.

A new ticketing system is in place with deals on offer for those in receipt of Universal Credit or other benefits which cost £1. And remember that if you live in Edinburgh and get your ticket stamped then your ticket remains valid for a year.

- Style & Society: Dressing the Georgians
- The King's Gallery The Palace of Holyroodhouse
- 22 March to 22 September 2024



The newly named King's Gallery opens after more than a year with an exhibition Style and Society: Dressing the Georgians
 PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter



The newly named King's Gallery opens after more than a year

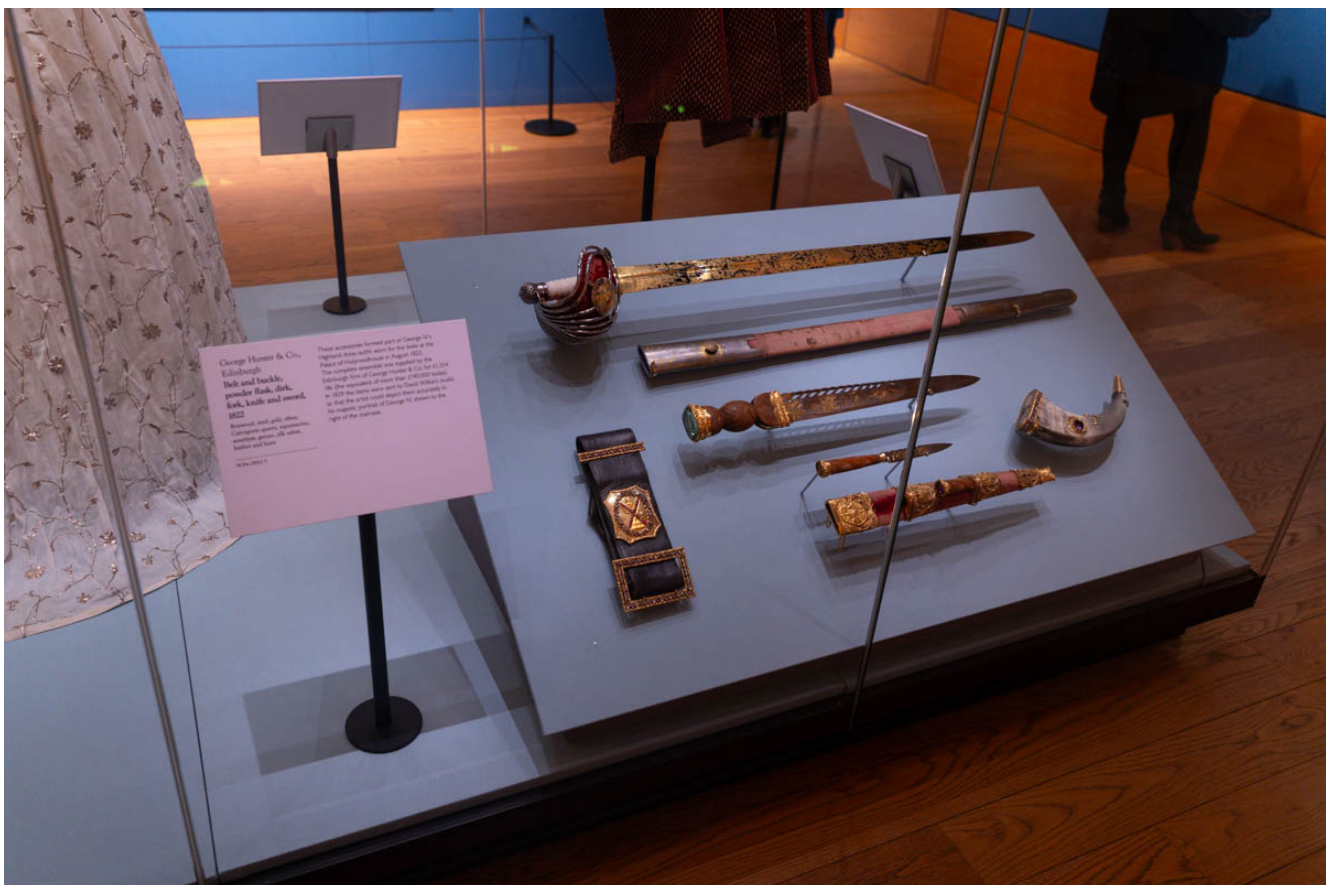
with an exhibition Style and Society: Dressing the Georgians
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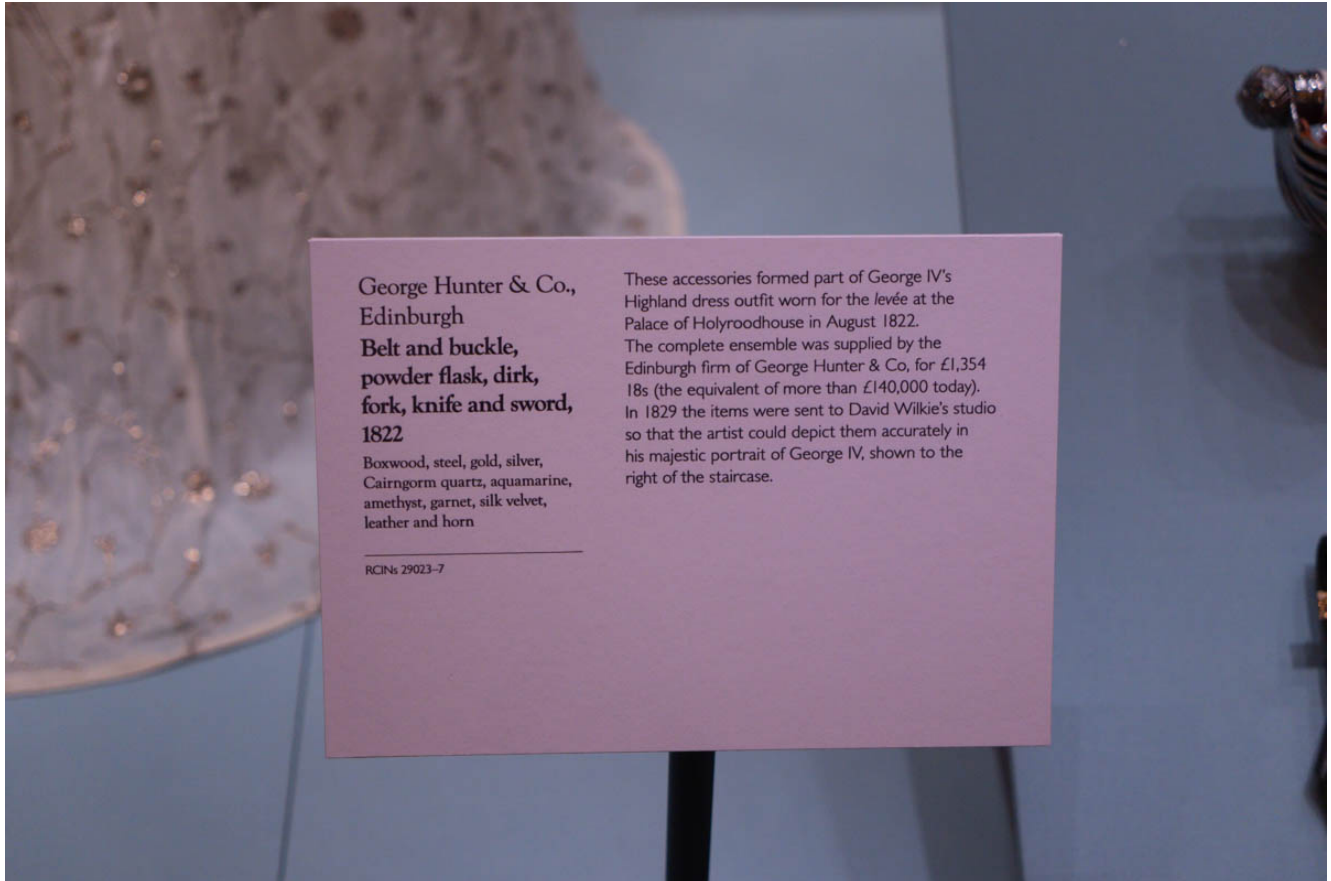
A cotton sack gown used the new fabric, cotton which could be dyed and washed. The newly named King's Gallery opens after more than a year's closure for renovation with an exhibition Style and Society: Dressing the Georgians PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter



George IV by Sir David Wilkie at the newly named King's Gallery opens after more than a year's closure for renovation with an exhibition Style and Society: Dressing the Georgians
 PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter



Accessories which were part of George IV's highland dress outfit worn for the levée at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in August 1822. The ensemble was provided by Edinburgh firm George Hunter & Co. The newly named King's Gallery opens after more than a year with an exhibition Style and Society: Dressing the Georgians PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter



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