

TATLER

For the love of dogs! Exquisite new exhibition celebrates human devotion to their canine companions

‘Portraits of Dogs: from Gainsborough to Hockney’ opens at The Wallace Collection on 29 March

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JEAN-JACQUES BACHELIER, *DOG OF THE HANAVA BREED*, 1768 © The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle

Dog lovers of the world, rejoice! A magnificent new exhibition showcasing the most exquisite canine portraits will go on display at The Wallace Collection later this month.

'Portraits of Dogs: from Gainsborough to Hockney', which will run from 29 March-15 October after being delayed due to the pandemic, celebrates human devotion to dogs over the centuries through a carefully curated selection of 50 paintings, sculptures, drawings and taxidermy.

The Wallace Collection's Director, Dr Xavier Bray, himself the owner of pugs Bluebell and Winston, said the idea for such an exhibition had been in the pipeline for a long time. 'Fortunately, the Wallace Collection lends itself perfectly to the staging of such an exhibition,' he said.

'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.'



QUEEN VICTORIA WITH A PET DOG AT BALMORAL, 1867 Hulton Deutsch/Getty Images

The earliest example in the new exhibition is 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 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 by Leonardo da Vinci (c. 1490–95), on loan from the National Galleries of Scotland, which focuses intently on a left forepaw, possibly that of a deerhound.

[Queen Victoria’s love of dogs](#) (a passion shared by her descendant, [Queen Elizabeth II](#)) also forms part of the exhibition. Treasures on display include a 1838 Landseer portrait of her Sussex spaniel, Tilco, and pencil and watercolour sketches she made of her other dogs, which are on loan from the Royal Collection Trust.



EDWIN LANDSEER, *DOUBTFUL CRUMBS*, 1858-1859 © THE TRUSTEES OF THE WALLACE COLLECTION © The Trustees of The Wallace Collection

Other artists featured include Thomas Gainsborough (*Tristram and Fox*, on loan from the Tate); James Ward (*Portrait of Fanny, A Favourite Dog*, Sir John Soane's Museum) and David Hockney (*Dog Painting 19*).

The exhibition could attract a [certain class of devoted dog owners](#), including Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Akshata Murty, whose [Fox Red Lab Nova calls Downing Street home](#), and Kim Murray, the wife of Sir Andy, who built a career as a pet portrait artist. Princess Olympia of Greece, who adopted Eccho in lockdown and new parents Cressida Bonas and husband Harry Wentworth-Stanley (owners of Budgie Bear the dachshund) could also be tempted to pay a visit. Perhaps even the Prince and Princess of Wales or [King Charles III and the Queen Consort](#), who continue the long royal tradition of owning dogs as pets, might pop in to see the other adorable pets on show.

[Portraits of Dogs: from Gainsborough to Hockney' at The Wallace Collection, 29 March-15 October.](#)



Richard Schmidt Collection/The David Hockney Foundation

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