



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

News release

Monday 19 June 2023

Major commission by Tracey Emin sees the new doors of the National Portrait Gallery feature portraits of women

45 portraits that “represent every woman” cover the three doors that now form the entrance to the National Portrait Gallery.

Hand drawn by Tracey Emin and cast in bronze, *The Doors* (2023) counterbalance the sculpted roundels, carved into the Gallery’s façade, depicting prominent male figures from history.



The Doors (2023) by Tracey Emin at the new National Portrait Gallery © Olivier Hess.

Today, the National Portrait Gallery announces a major new commission ahead of reopening later this week on Thursday 22 June – *The Doors* (2023) by Tracey Emin CBE RA. Consisting of 45 individual panels across the three new doors of the National Portrait Gallery, the major new public artwork advances the Gallery’s commitment to working with the greatest living artists and increasing the representation of women within its Collection.

Central to the Gallery’s new forecourt, Ross Place, Tracey Emin’s low-relief bronze panels are a celebration of women from different walks of life, known and unknown. Mothers, daughters,



sisters and friends, they are portraits of every woman. Central to the vision of the new National Portrait Gallery, the panels are the artist's contemporary response to the under-representation of women in historical art collections. *The Doors* (2023) now counterbalance the Portland stone busts, carved into the building's façade, which depict 18 male biographical writers, historians and eminent artists from history, including Horace Walpole, Hans Holbein the Younger, Sir Anthony van Dyck and Sir Joshua Reynolds and give this imposing public space a very human touch.

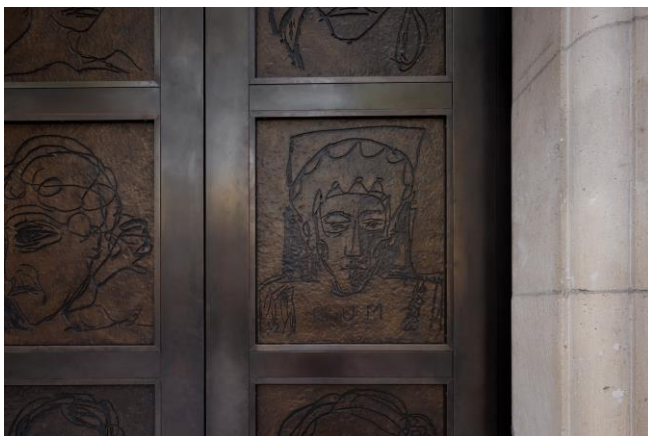


Three of Tracey Emin's 45 drawings of women that were cast in bronze to form *The Doors* (2023). © Tracey Emin.

Reworking the surface of the clay before casting the panels in bronze at an East London foundry, the artist's finger and thumbprints remain visible in metal, revealing the making process. Originally painted in acrylic on paper, Emin's drawings were then meticulously transcribed onto the bronze panels.



Tracey Emin in her Studio and the artist's sketches laid out in position © Harry Weller.



One of 45 panels from *The Doors* (2023) by Tracey Emin, in situ at the National Portrait Gallery © Olivier Hess.

"Women in history are greatly underrepresented. I didn't want to depict specific or identifiable figures. I felt like the doors of the National Portrait Gallery should represent every woman, every age and every culture throughout time. I used my self as a mental template, but the end result is many different women, some that exist in my mind and some that perhaps exist in reality here and now, as well as from the past. And with all terms of art, it's up to the viewer to discern what they feel and what they see or who they see for that matter. I want people to stand in-front of the doors and say, 'she looks like my mother, she looks like my best friend, my daughter'. People might also relate and see an element of pain or heartbreak in the images."

Tracey Emin CBE RA
Artist



"In 2020, Jamie Fobert and I talked about how the doors of the new National Portrait Gallery needed a human touch to balance the imposing façade with its roundels of eighteen men from British history. Tracey Emin came immediately to mind as one of the greatest artists working today and was the natural choice for this prominent commission, given her mastery of drawing and bronze sculpture, here brought together in an innovative and striking way. She has created something perfect for its context, that is moving yet monumental and that we hope everyone who walks through our doors will enjoy and relate to."

Dr Nicholas Cullinan
Director, National Portrait Gallery

Tracey Emin will join Dr Nicholas Cullinan in conversation on Friday 23 June 2023 to discuss her new commission and the Gallery's reopening. Tickets to the event, which forms part of the Gallery's First Look Festival, can be purchased at npg.org.uk/firstlookfestival. Those aged 30 and under can access £5 tickets to the live stream online.

More than 50 works acquired and commissioned during the Gallery's closure will be displayed when the National Portrait Gallery reopens on 22 June, substantially enhancing the representation of women across the its Collection. Important historic loans and acquisitions have enriched our galleries, such as the earliest large-scale portrait of an English woman and one of the first large-scale portraits of a single individual in the UK, Lady Margaret Beaufort (circa 1510), and the self-portrait of the Victorian miniaturist Sarah Biffin (circa 1820), who was born without arms and legs. Increased since closure, 36% of portraits on display across the Gallery will be of women, rising to 48% in post-1900 galleries.

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For further press information, images and interview requests please contact:
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Notes to editors

Tracey Emin CBE RA in conversation with Nicholas Cullinan

Friday 23 June 2023
19.00-20.00

£20 on site (SOLD OUT) / £8 online, booking essential

Artist Tracey Emin and the Gallery's Director Dr Nicholas Cullinan come together to speak more about the transformed Gallery, the artist's work and her distinctive engagement with portraiture.

www.npg.org.uk/firstlookfestival

National Portrait Gallery

Founded in 1856, the National Portrait Gallery tells the story of Britain through portraits, using art to bring history to life and explore living today. From global icons, to unsung heroes, our Collection is filled with the stories that have shaped, and continue to shape a nation. We celebrate the power of portraiture and offer encounters with some of the world's greatest and most exciting new artists, promoting engagement with portraiture in all media to a wide-ranging public by conserving, growing and sharing the world's largest collection of portraits.

The Gallery in St Martin's Place, London is currently closed until 22 June 2023, while essential building works take place on the *Inspiring People* redevelopment project, which will transform the Gallery, including a complete refurbishment of the building and a new learning centre. During the closure period, we have continued to share our Collection digitally, as well as through a series of nationwide partnerships and collaborations.

www.npg.org.uk

Collaborators on the *Inspiring People* project include Jamie Fobert Architects; conservation architects, Purcell; structural engineers, Price & Myers; services engineers, Max Fordham; project manager, Gardiner & Theobald; main contractor, Gilbert-Ash; and interpretation designers, Nissen Richards Studio.

The Blavatnik Family Foundation

The [Blavatnik Family Foundation](http://www.blavatnikfamilyfoundation.org) supports world-renowned educational, scientific, cultural, and charitable institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and across the globe. Led by Sir Leonard Blavatnik, founder and chairman of Access Industries, the Foundation advances and promotes innovation, discovery, and creativity to benefit the whole of society. Over the past decade, the Foundation has contributed more than \$1 billion to over 250 organizations.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we Inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/HeritageFundUK), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HeritageFundUK) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/HeritageFundUK) and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £46 billion for projects and more than 670,000 grants have been awarded across the UK. More than £30 million raised each week goes to good causes across the UK.



The Garfield Weston Foundation

Established in 1958, the Garfield Weston Foundation is a family-founded charitable grant-making trust, which gives away around £90 million a year to charities across the UK.

Each year the Foundation gives away its income and donations have continued to grow. Since it was established, it has donated over £1.4 billion, of which over half has been given away in the past 10 years alone. In the most recent financial year, the Foundation gave away nearly £90 million to over 1,980 charities across the UK.

The Ross Foundation

The Ross Foundation was created in 2007 with a core mission to help children and young people discover their strengths by offering them a wide range of world-class educational opportunities. We support organisations that inspire young people and encourage them to take the chance to embrace new skills and passion.