

National Portrait Gallery Unveils Newly Commissioned Portrait of Baroness Boothroyd

Monday 13 October, 2014

A newly commissioned portrait of the first, and only, female Speaker of the House of Commons, Baroness Boothroyd, has been unveiled at the National Portrait Gallery, it was announced today (Monday 13 October 2014). Commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery, it is the first painted portrait of Boothroyd to enter the Collection.

Painted by artist Brendan Kelly, the larger than life-sized, square portrait (1m x 1m) shows Baroness Boothroyd wearing a formal, red jacket with a gold brooch depicting a portcullis pinned to the front - a personal item which she designed herself to commemorate her time in the House of Commons. In the portrait, Boothroyd is standing upright, with the subtle lighting illuminating her against a deep purple background.

Baroness Boothroyd visited Kelly's London studio to sit for the portrait. The final composition conveys the renowned charisma and defiant attitude of one of the most important women in parliament in recent decades.

Baroness Boothroyd is the only woman to have held the prominent position of Speaker in the House of Commons, a role she undertook between 1992 and 2000. Born in Yorkshire, Boothroyd worked briefly as a dancer with the Tiller Girls troupe, before turning to politics in the 1950s, working as a political assistant for Labour politicians in London. She was a volunteer for the Kennedy presidential campaign in Washington in the 1960s, and worked as a secretary in Congress. Boothroyd served as MP for West Bromwich West from 1974 to 2000, and MEP between 1975 and 77. She became Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons in 1987 and Speaker in 1992. Between 1994 and 2007 she was Chancellor of the Open University, and is patron of a number of charitable trusts.

Following her retirement in 2000, Boothroyd was made a Life Peer in 2001 and, in 2005, she was appointed to the Order of Merit, the personal honour of Her Majesty the Queen. Boothroyd was also patron of the fundraising trust for the Monument to the Women of World War II, which is located in the centre of Whitehall and was unveiled by Queen Elizabeth II and dedicated by Boothroyd in July 2005.

Born in Edinburgh, Brendan Kelly studied at Camberwell College of Art and the Slade School in London. He won second prize in the BP Portrait Award in 2001 and was awarded the de Lazlo Award for the best portrait by a young artist at the Royal Society of Portrait Painters in 2007. In 2006, Kelly spent time as a war artist in Afghanistan, producing as a result a large-scale group portrait of international NATO generals. Kelly was commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery to paint General Sir Mike Jackson in 2006. Prior to accepting the commission to paint Baroness Boothroyd, Kelly completed a full length state portrait of the current Speaker, John Bercow for the House of Commons Collection.

Sandy Nairne, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, says:
'Baroness Boothroyd is a great force in the political sphere and Brendan Kelly's portrait captures her forthright character mixed with kindness and public spirit.'

Brendan Kelly says:
'Close up the picture is painted with strong, almost violent brush marks but from a distance the picture becomes softer and more atmospheric. This is because I wanted to capture Baroness Boothroyd's strength and power as well as her charm and femininity.'

Brendan Kelly's portrait of Baroness Boothroyd was commissioned by the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery and joins a number of photographs of the sitter in the Collection by Nick Sinclair, Bassano, Anita Corbin and Gemma Levine.

Baroness Boothroyd by Brendan Kelly is in Room 36 in the Ground Floor Lerner Contemporary Galleries at the National Portrait Gallery, London, from Monday 13 October 2014, Admission Free.

BETTY BOOTHROYD, BARONESS BOOTHROYD (b.1929)
by Brendan Kelly (b. 1970)
Oil on canvas, 2014 (1003mm x 1002mm)

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Baroness Boothroyd by Brendan Kelly, 2014 ©National Portrait Gallery, London

National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE, opening hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 10am – 6pm (Gallery closure commences at 5.50pm) Late Opening: Thursday, Friday: 10am – 9pm (Gallery closure commences at 8.50pm) Nearest Underground: Leicester Square/Charing Cross General information: 0207 306 0055 Recorded information: 020 7312 2463 Website/Tickets: www.npg.org.uk

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