



alice instone

THE HOUSE OF FALLEN WOMEN

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FOREWORD

HERBERT SMITH LLP

Herbert Smith is delighted to have the opportunity to support this latest exhibition by Alice Instone.

The House of Fallen Women depicts infamous women from history, represented by well-known, modern day, public figures. It is an intriguing journey through our past with a modern twist. These paintings confront historical feminine stereotypes while celebrating the lives and actions of strong women in our society today.

I hope you will find the exhibition an enjoyable and invigorating experience and join us in wishing Alice continued success with her work.

Martyn Hopper
Herbert Smith

Herbert Smith

 Herbert Smith in association with
Gleiss Lutz and Stibbe

INTRODUCTION

INDIA KNIGHT

Powerful women – whether their power comes from sex, money, marriage, politics or all four – have a hard time reputation-wise. History is generally not kind to them, rushing to smooth over their complexities and call them names instead. They are viragos, seductresses, demonic plotters, enchantresses and witches. They are mad or “unnatural,” or both. Rumours abound; gossip swirls; entire careers get reduced to one-liners. Catherine II of Russia, known as Catherine the Great, is remembered for supposedly having relations with a horse, not for her impressive grasp on foreign policy (and the rest).

Sometimes the gossip is not merely career, but life-ending: Anne Boleyn, a towering figure that single-handedly brought about England’s seismic parting from Rome, is beheaded because she supposedly slept with her own brother – a better excuse than simply being too clever by half. Courtesans, often unusually intelligent and ambitious women using the oldest shortcut to power available to them at the time, are merely “whores”. And those women that do manage to get into positions of real power, through accidents of birth or marriage, are eternally, restlessly looking over their shoulder; ever at the mercy of a male-decreed killing, incarceration or – for the lucky ones – exile to a nunnery. In real life as in literature, “difficult” women with robust ambitions are always punished. No wonder Lady Macbeth, undone and ‘unsex’d’ went mad: to have remained sane and sanguine would have been an affront to the whole of femininity.

Alice Instone has been drawing women since she was little: “I think there may have been some link in my mind between the perfect female exterior and gaining some kind of control,” she says. “Clearly I’m still obsessed by the relationship between gender and power, but it’s also about femininity, beauty, female sexuality, how we consume images of women, how they make us feel. I’ve always been drawn to the ‘bad’ woman, seductresses and the sort of women who seemed to have lots of power (even if it was very temporary) – so for this show I wanted to immerse myself in all those memorable images that I had mentally collected over the years.”

Reading the women’s biographies in this catalogue often sends a shudder down the spine. It is worth remembering that the indignities visited on the women portrayed here only affect us because they are, in the early part of the 21st century, still so resonant. Sex and scandal, the cutting down to size, the mocking of appearance, the relentless desire of society to pack women into neat little boxes – and, of course, the bizarre need to ‘punish’ every woman who’s no better than she should be.

But not everybody wants to play – not then, not now. The women in these paintings paid the highest prices for their “transgressions”. We don’t have to, and the very least we can do is raise a glass to them in all their bad, wild, brave, magnificent glory.

Curated by **Medeia Cohan-Petrolino**

THE SITTERS

Anne Boleyn & Freyja	Sam Atkinson – Lawyer
Bathsheba & Messalina	Sarah Shotton – Creative Director, Agent Provocateur
Boudicca	Pattie Boyd – Photographer, Model and inspiration for the song ‘Layla’
Catherine de Medici	India Knight – Journalist
Cleopatra	Alia Al-Senussi – Art Adviser, Collector and Patron
Cora Pearl	Genevieve Garner – Fashion Editor of Libertine Magazine and Model
Cutlass Liz Shirland	Shami Chakrabarti – Director of Liberty (Human Rights Group)
Delilah	Alshamsha Heath – Teacher and Artist
Eleanor of Aquitaine	Cherie Blair – Barrister
Elizabeth I	Annie Lennox – Musician
Frigg & Mary Wollstonecraft	Lil Rudebeck – Charity Worker
Gráinne Ní Mháille	Anne Clark – PR
Guinevere	Laura Bailey – Model, Writer and Muse
Hariette Wilson	Maggie Zownir – Entrepreneur
Helen of Troy	Lola Lennox – Musician
Katherine Swynford	Kathryn Blair – Student
Kitty Fisher	Caitlin Moran – Journalist and Writer
Lady Emma Hamilton	Emma Freud – Actress, Writer and Producer
Lady Harriet Mordaunt	Joanna Berryman – Interior Designer
Lettice Knollys	Anita Zabludowicz – Art Patron
Lilith	Grace Saunders – Bestselling Author
Livia, Empress of Rome	Sarah Atkinson – Lawyer
Lola Montez & Ushas	Lisa Moran Parker – Film Producer
Lucrezia Borgia	Lorraine Candy – Editor of Elle
Madame de Pompadour	Jo Wood – Environmental Campaigner and Model
Marie Antoinette	Emilia Fox – Actress
Mata Hari	Alice Temperley – Fashion Designer
Medea	Nicole Farhi – Fashion Designer
Pandora	Lara Bohinc – Jewellery Designer
Theda Bara	Claudia Winkleman – TV Presenter
Venus & Lady Macbeth	Baukjen de Swaan Arons – Co-Founder of Isabella Oliver fashion label

THE HOUSE OF FALLEN WOMEN

oil on canvas, 150 x 150cm



ANNE BOLEYN

(Sam Atkinson), oil on canvas, 60 x 75 cm

Anne Boleyn was the second wife of King Henry VIII. She resisted the King's attempts to seduce her, refusing to become his mistress as her sister had. Within a year, he proposed marriage to her. Both assumed an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon could be obtained within a matter of months. When it became clear that Pope Clement VII would not annul the marriage, the breaking of the power of the Roman Catholic Church in England began.

Anne was crowned Queen of England on 1 June 1533. On 7 September, she gave birth to the future Elizabeth I of England. However, Anne Boleyn's sharp intelligence, political acumen and forward manners, although desirable in a mistress, were unacceptable in a wife and crucially she failed to produce a male heir. Three miscarriages followed, and by March 1536, Henry was courting Jane Seymour.

Anne was referred to by some of her subjects as "The king's whore" or a "naughty paike [prostitute]" and public opinion turned further against her following her failure to produce a son, sinking even lower after the executions of her enemies Sir Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher. However, with her arrest, trial and execution, public opinion shifted to sympathy, and disapproval of Henry's behaviour.

She was beheaded on 19 May, kneeling upright, in the French style of executions. Her final prayer consisted of her repeating, "To Jesus Christ I commend my soul; Lord Jesus receive my soul." Her ladies removed her headdress and necklaces, and then tied a blindfold over her eyes. The execution was swift and consisted of a single stroke.

Henry failed to have organised any kind of funeral or even a proper coffin for her. Her body lay on the scaffold for some time before a man found an empty arrow chest and placed her head and body inside. She was then buried in an unmarked grave in the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula. Her skeleton was identified during renovations of the chapel in the reign of Queen Victoria and Anne's resting place is now marked in the marble floor.

Historians view the charges against her, which included adultery and incest, as unconvincing. Anne has been called "the most influential and important queen consort England has ever had," since she provided the occasion for Henry VIII to declare his independence from Rome.



LUCREZIA BORGIA

(Lorraine Candy), oil on canvas, 60 x 75 cm

Lucrezia Borgia was the daughter of Rodrigo Borgia who became Pope Alexander VI. Her family came to epitomise the ruthless Machiavellian politics and sexual corruption alleged to be characteristic of the Renaissance Papacy.

By the time she was thirteen, she had been betrothed twice, but her father called off both engagements. He had Lucrezia marry Giovanni Sforza to establish an alliance with his powerful Milanese family. The wedding was a scandalous event but was not much more extravagant than many other Renaissance celebrations.

Before long, the Borgia family no longer needed the Sforzas, so her father may have covertly ordered the execution of Giovanni. The generally accepted version is that Lucrezia was informed of this by her brother Cesare, and she warned her husband, who fled Rome. Keen to arrange another advantageous marriage for Lucrezia, Alexander and Cesare forced Giovanni Sforza to sign confessions of impotence and documents of annulment before witnesses.

During the prolonged process of the annulment, Lucrezia may have consummated a relationship with someone, probably Alexander's messenger Perotto, so that she was actually pregnant when her marriage was annulled for non-consummation. If so, the child was born in secret. Some believe the child was that of her brother Cesare. As a Cardinal of the Holy Church, if he had been sharing an illicit sexual relationship with his sister, it would have had to be concealed from everyone, especially their father (the Pope).

Lucretia's second marriage was to Alfonso of Aragon. Tradition has it that Cesare may have had him murdered. Lucrezia was broken-hearted upon

Alfonso's death. They had only one child, who predeceased his mother at the age of twelve.

Lucrezia's father arranged a third marriage to Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. She gave him a number of children and proved to be a respectable and accomplished Renaissance duchess, effectively rising above her questionable past and surviving the fall of the Borgias following her father's death. However, neither partner was faithful: Lucrezia enjoyed a long relationship with her bisexual brother-in-law, as well as a love affair with the poet Pietro Bembo. She died in 1519 from complications after giving birth to her eighth child.



"I was intrigued when I heard Alice was painting a series of notorious women from history and wanted me to be Lucretia Borgia. Lucretia is quite a mysterious figure – we don't even know if the likenesses we have of her are even really her. She is also a perfect example of how history has misrepresented powerful or influential women. Alice thought I had a physical resemblance to her, as she is thought to have been very fair, and I like to think that the painting retains some of Lucretia's mystery, with its areas of transparent light and impenetrable darkness."

Lorraine Candy



KITTY FISHER

(Caitlin Moran), oil on canvas, 60 x 75 cm

Kitty Fisher was a prominent British courtesan whose celebrity was greatly boosted by the attention that Sir Joshua Reynolds and other artists paid her. She was originally a milliner, but with a flair for publicity, she became best known for her high-profile affairs with men of wealth. Her appearance and dress were scrutinised and copied, scurrilous broadsheets and satires upon her were printed and circulated, and her portrait by Reynolds as Cleopatra Dissolving the Pearl was engraved.

When he visited London in 1763, Giacomo Casanova wrote: "... the illustrious Kitty Fisher... was magnificently dressed, and it is no exaggeration to say that she had on diamonds worth five hundred thousand francs... Mrs Wells told us that Kitty had eaten a bank-note for a thousand guineas, on a slice of bread and butter, that very day."

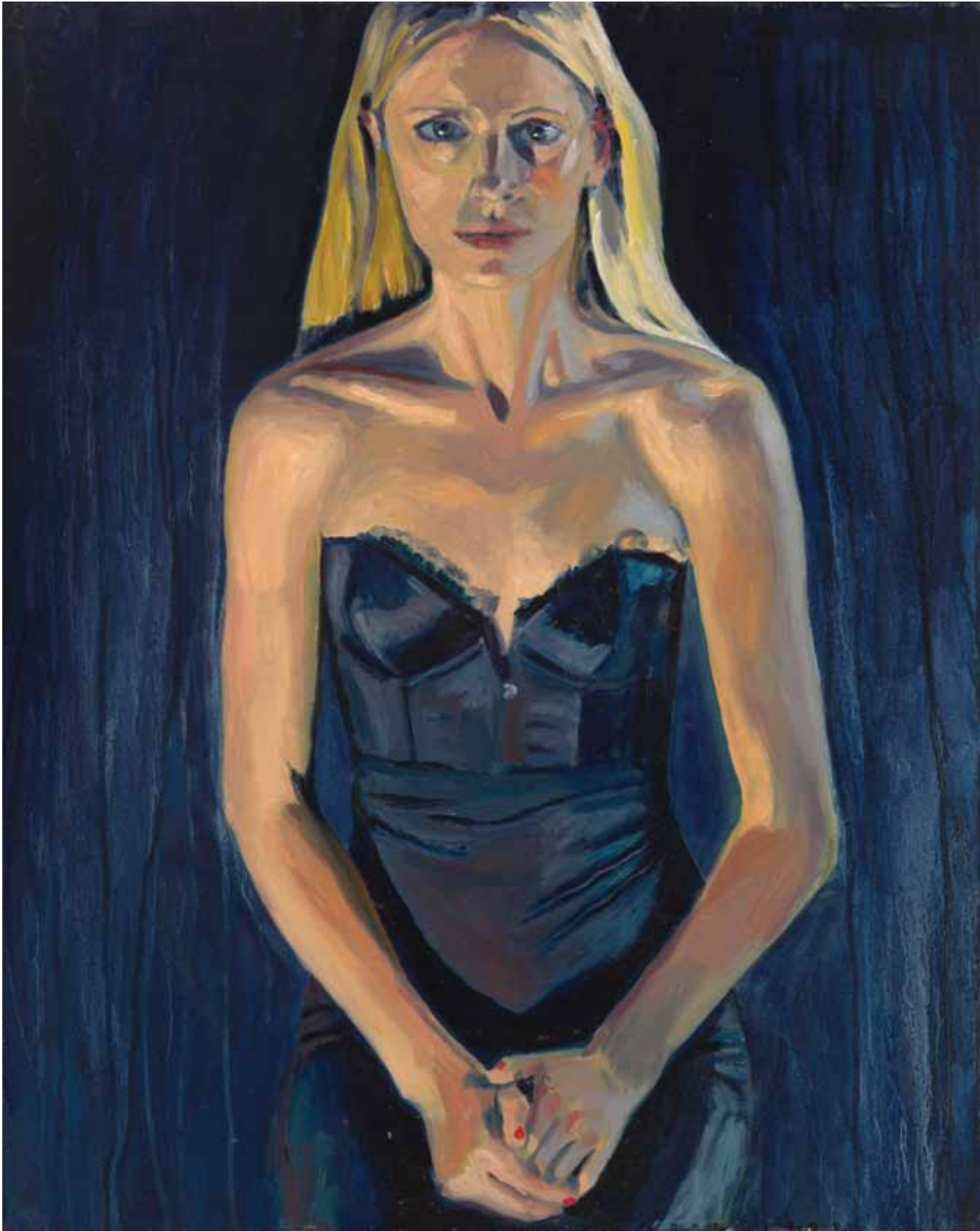
Kitty maintained a famous rivalry with Maria Gunning, due to Kitty's affair with Gunning's husband, George William Coventry, 6th Earl of Coventry. Giustiniana

Wynne, wrote: "The other day they ran into each other in the park and Lady Coventry asked Kitty the name of the dressmaker who had made her dress. Kitty Fisher answered she had better ask Lord Coventry as he had given her the dress as a gift."

In 1766, she married John Norris, son of the M.P. for Rye and grandson of Admiral Sir John Norris. She came to live at her husband's family house, Hemsted (now the premises of the prestigious English public school, Benenden School). However, she died in 1767, only four months after her marriage, some sources say from the effects of lead-based cosmetics, while others suggest smallpox.

Her last wish was to be buried in Benenden churchyard dressed in her best ball gown. She is immortalised in the nursery rhyme, Lucy Locket: "Lucy Locket lost her pocket, Kitty Fisher found it; But ne'er a penny was there in't Except the binding round it."





GUINEVERE

(Laura Bailey), oil on canvas, 60 x 75 cm

Guinevere was the legendary queen consort of King Arthur. She was most famous for her love affair with Arthur's chief knight Sir Lancelot. Their betrayal of Arthur leads to the downfall of the kingdom.

In some adaptations, she is betrothed to Arthur early in his career, while he is garnering support. When Lancelot arrives later, she is instantly smitten, and they soon consummate the adultery that will bring about Arthur's fall. However, Arthur is not aware of their relationship or adultery until at a feast when he realises that neither Lancelot nor Guinevere is there. Lancelot flees for his life while Arthur reluctantly sentences his queen to burn at the stake. Lancelot rescues the queen, and in the course of the battle Gawain's brothers are killed, so that he pressures Arthur into war with Lancelot.

When Arthur goes to France to fight Lancelot, he leaves Guinevere in the care of Mordred, who plots to marry the queen himself and take Arthur's throne. In some versions Guinevere assents to Mordred's proposal, but in others, she takes refuge in a convent. Hearing of the treachery, Arthur returns to Britain and slays Mordred, but his wounds are so severe that he is taken to the isle of Avalon. Guinevere meets Lancelot one last time, then returns to the convent where she spends the remainder of her life.

"Alice has a talent for exploring sexuality in a very feminine way. She often reveals something about us without us even realising and has a talent for making an emotional connection with her subject."

Laura Bailey

GUINEVERE

(Laura Bailey), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm



LADY EMMA HAMILTON

(Emma Freud), oil on canvas, 60 x 75 cm

Lady Emma Hamilton is best remembered as the mistress of Lord Nelson and as the muse of the painter George Romney. Aged fifteen she became the mistress of Sir Harry Featherstonhaugh, conceiving a child. Sir Harry was furious at the unwanted pregnancy and she became the Hon Charles Greville's mistress. When the child was born, it was removed to be raised elsewhere. Greville sent Emma to sit for George Romney and she became well-known in society circles for her beauty and wit. However, Greville needed a rich wife so persuaded his uncle, Sir William Hamilton, British Envoy to Naples, to take Emma as his mistress. Sir William was smitten and, to Greville's shock, married Emma.

Now Lady Hamilton, Emma became a close friend of the Queen of Naples and as wife of the British Envoy, she welcomed Nelson after his victory at the Battle of the Nile. Nelson's adventures had prematurely aged him: he had lost an arm and most of his teeth, and was afflicted by coughing spells. Emma nursed him and they fell in love. Their affair seems to have been tolerated, and perhaps even encouraged, by the elderly

Sir William. Emma and Nelson were by now the two single most famous Britons in the world and in 1801 Emma gave birth to Nelson's daughter Horatia. Nelson, Emma and Sir William lived together in a ménage à trois that fascinated the public, with the papers reporting on their every move. Emma set fashions in dress, home decoration and even dinner party menus.

Sir William died in 1803 and Nelson returned to sea, leaving Emma alone and pregnant with their second child (by Nelson). The child, a girl, died a few weeks after her birth. After Nelson's death in 1805, Emma quickly exhausted the small pension Sir William had left her, and fell deeply into debt. In spite of his status as a national hero, Nelson's instructions to the government to provide for Emma and Horatia were ignored. Emma and Horatia spent a year in a virtual debtor's prison before moving to France to try to escape her creditors. She died in poverty of amoebic dysentery in Calais, in January 1815. Horatia subsequently married the Rev. Philip Ward and never publicly recognised that she was the daughter of Emma Hamilton.

LADY EMMA HAMILTON

(Emma Freud), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm



"Experiencing Alice at work is an amazing privilege. She does something so unselfconscious and adorable with her eyes while she paints that I initially thought she was trying to get fresh. She wasn't – it's her way of seeing beyond the clothes and skin into what lies beneath. She is a beauty and angelic, but she has so much empathy for the fallen women she has painted, that there is clearly something of them inside her - which makes her slightly wicked too."

Emma Freud



VENUS

(Baukjen de Swaan Arons), oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm

Venus was the Roman equivalent of the Greek goddess Aphrodite; goddess of love, beauty and sexual desire. According to Greek poet Hesiod, she was born when Cronus cut off Ouranos' genitals and threw them into the sea, and from the aphros (sea foam) arose Aphrodite.

Because of her beauty other gods feared that jealousy would interrupt the peace among them and lead to war, and so Zeus married her to Hephaestus, who was not viewed as a threat. Her unhappiness in marriage caused her to frequently seek out the companionship of her lover Mars. Later she was both Adonis' lover and his surrogate mother. Myrtles, doves, sparrows, and swans are sacred to her.

"My friend Alice had said for a while that she wanted me to sit for her. A few dates were put in the diary only to be rescheduled time and time again as work or other things got in the way. But finally in late 2009 we could both make it, and so after work I headed south of the river with my husband. Baby Beatrice was asleep in her bedroom, the husbands cooked and had drinks in the kitchen, while we went to Alice's studio.

"Once there, Alice asked me to lie on a tiny beautiful sofa that reminded me of Alice in Wonderland. Not having much experience in sitting still and never having sat to be painted before

I wasn't sure what to expect. But I loved it. Alice is a friend and so I know her off duty – I've never seen her in 'her work' mode. Alice had a very serious face, squinting as she was trying to capture the details. All I did was lie back and watch her do what she is fabulous at. She was hugely focused and I found my thoughts drifting off, and actually having a really relaxing time. Afterwards we joined our husbands in the kitchen and had dinner together. All in all, a really relaxing and wonderful experience."

Baukjen de Swaan Arons





MESSALINA

(Sarah Shotton), oil on canvas, 75 x 100 cm

Valeria Messalina (c. AD 17/20 – 48) was the third wife of Roman Emperor Claudius. A powerful and influential woman with a reputation for promiscuity, she conspired against her (much older) husband and was executed when the plot was discovered.

Messalina bore Claudius two children: a daughter Claudia Octavia, who was a future empress, stepsister and first wife to the emperor Nero; and a son, Britannicus. In AD 41 the Emperor Caligula (also Messalina's second cousin) and his family were murdered and the Praetorian Guard proclaimed Claudius the new Emperor and Messalina the new Empress.

Messalina became the most powerful woman in the Roman Empire. Claudius bestowed various honours on her and through her status, she became very influential. However, Claudius, as an older man, could have died at any moment, so to improve her own security and ensure the future of her children, Messalina sought to eliminate anyone who was a potential threat. She was able to manipulate Claudius into ordering the exile or execution of various people. The ancient Roman sources, portray Messalina as an insulting, disgraceful, cruel, avaricious and foolish nymphomaniac.

"I met Alice in Chelsea Arts Club. She asked me to sit for her and we have been friends ever since. The sitting happened around Christmas, which seemed an odd time of the year to lie scantily clad and motionless for four hours, and after she prised my high heels off me and made me scrape my make-up off, it ended up being the best therapy session I have ever had!"

The calibre of women chosen to sit and portray such iconic females in history show her true talent, and the project as a whole is an

Messalina became interested in the attractive Roman Senator Gaius Silius and they became lovers, plotting to kill the weak Emperor replacing him with Silius. Silius was childless and wanted to adopt Britannicus. On discovering the plot, Claudius ordered the deaths of Messalina and Silius. Messalina was offered the choice of killing herself, but was too afraid to do so, so was decapitated.

When Messalina's death was announced to him, Claudius showed no emotion, but asked for more wine. The only ones who mourned for her were her children. The Roman Senate ordered Messalina's name removed from all public or private places and all statues of her were removed.

Claudius married his niece as his fourth wife, adopting her son as his heir. He became known as Nero and succeeded Claudius as emperor instead of Britannicus. In AD 55, Britannicus was secretly poisoned on Nero's orders. Nero married Messalina's daughter Claudia Octavia in AD 53 but she was killed in AD 62 so that Nero could marry Poppaea Sabina. Poppaea's mother had been one of the victims of Messalina's intrigues.

Messalina's name is now often used as a synonym for sexual promiscuity, manipulativeness, and treachery.

example of female empowerment that I am proud to be part of. Alice chose Messalina as one of my characters. She was the most powerful woman in the Roman Empire, with a reputation for promiscuity, who used her sexuality to manipulate her husband the Emperor Claudius. To me, when reading about Messalina, it was very interesting to see even in history the power of seduction and just how hypnotising a woman's sexuality can be."

Sarah Shotton

BATHSHEBA

(Sarah Shotton), oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm

Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah (by whom she gave birth to Solomon who later became King) and David, King of Israel and Judah.

David saw Bathsheba (then married to Uriah) taking a bath while walking on the roof of his house. He immediately desired her, so seduced her, and later made her pregnant.

In an effort to conceal his sin, David summoned Uriah from the army (with whom he was on campaign) in the hope that Uriah would reconstitute his marriage and think that the child is his. After repeated efforts to convince Uriah to fertilise Bathsheba, the king gave the order to his general that Uriah should be abandoned during a heated battle and left to the hands of the

enemy. Ironically, David had Uriah himself carry the message that ordered his death. After Uriah was dead, David made the now widowed Bathsheba his wife.

God accordingly sent Nathan the prophet to reprove David. The king at once confessed his sin and expressed sincere repentance. Bathsheba's child by David was smitten with a severe illness and died a few days after birth, which the king accepted as his punishment. Nathan also noted that David's house would be cursed with turmoil because of this murder.

In David's old age, Bathsheba secured the succession to the throne of her son Solomon, instead of David's eldest surviving son.



BOUDICCA

(Pattie Boyd), oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm

Boudicca was a queen of the Brittonic Iceni tribe of what is now known as East Anglia in England, who led an uprising of the tribes against the occupying forces of the Roman Empire.

Boudicca's husband, an Icenian king who had ruled as a nominally independent ally of Rome, left his kingdom jointly to his daughters and the Roman Emperor in his will. However, when he died his will was ignored. The kingdom was annexed as if conquered, Boudicca was flogged and her daughters raped, and Roman financiers called in their loans.

In AD 60 or 61, Boudicca led the Iceni, along with the Trinovantes and others, in revolt. They destroyed Camulodunum (Colchester), formerly the capital of the Trinovantes, but now a colonia (a settlement for discharged Roman soldiers) and the site of a temple to the former emperor Claudius, which was built and maintained at local expense. They also routed a Roman legion, the IX Hispana, sent to relieve the settlement.

On hearing the news of the revolt, Suetonius hurried to Londinium (London), the twenty-year old commercial settlement that was the rebels' next target. Concluding he did not have the numbers to defend it, Suetonius evacuated and abandoned it. It was burnt to the ground, as was Verulamium (St Albans). An estimated 70,000–80,000 people were killed in the three cities (though the figures are suspect).

Suetonius, meanwhile, regrouped his forces in the West Midlands, and despite being heavily outnumbered, defeated Boudicca in the Battle of Watling Street. The crisis caused the emperor Nero to consider withdrawing all Roman forces from the island, but Suetonius' eventual victory over Boudicca secured Roman control of the province.

Boudicca then poisoned herself so she would not be captured.

"A mutual friend, the photographer Hugh Gilbert, told me about Alice's paintings of notorious women and I immediately said I'd like to be as wicked as possible! Alice and I discussed several possible characters but I was drawn to Boudicca's strength in the face of so much adversity. She is remembered as a fearsome warrior, but her life was incredibly tragic and I think Alice's painting captures something of her inner world rather than the two dimensional creation that Boudicca has become. It is fascinating to see how different eras have reinterpreted these women's lives to reflect their own values."

Pattie Boyd



CORA PEARL

(Genevieve Garner), oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm

Cora Pearl (1835–8 July 1886) was a famous courtesan of the 19th century French demimonde. The daughter of a musician she was born in England, but educated in France. She became involved in prostitution whilst in London but it was in Paris that she adopted the name of Cora Pearl and became involved with some of the richest, most powerful men in Europe.

The Duke of Rivoli became her first major benefactor. However, while with him, she developed a serious gambling habit, and after bailing her out financially one too many times, the Duke ended their affair. Her famous exploits included dancing on a carpet of orchids, bathing before her dinner guests in a silver tub full of champagne and presenting herself at dinner, naked and decked in cream, as a final dish.

Her lovers included Prince William of Orange, son of King William III of the Netherlands; Prince Achille Murat, grandson of Joachim Murat; and the Duke of Morny, Napoleon III's half-brother. Morny, described

by one historian as “a taller, handsomer edition of the Emperor”, has been said to be the most intelligent and distinguished of her lovers, with an insatiable sexual appetite. A few years after Morny's premature death in 1865, Cora became the mistress to Prince Napoleon, cousin to Emperor Napoleon III.

Her activities earned her great wealth, but after one of her jealous lovers shot himself on her doorstep (he survived) she fled to London. However the scandal meant that few men of wealth wanted to have her as an acquaintance. Returning to Paris she found that a new conservatism prevailed and in desperation started to sell her possessions. “Memoires de Cora Pearl” was published in French in 1886 and according to William Blatchford, transcriber of “Grand Horizontal”, “proved extraordinarily dull”, to the extent that neither it nor its English translation were ever reprinted.

She died the same year and is buried in a grave (number 10, row 4) with no tombstone at Batignolles cemetery.

“When I was initially asked to be painted as Cora Pearl, I had no idea who she was, but after researching her I realised her to be a truly fascinating and flamboyant character. Although there are no obvious similarities between her and me (thank goodness!), I have been able to sympathise with her over the lack of work for young girls after education and the difficulty in wanting and getting what you want. Her life tells a tale that is true of so many successful and famous people, in that after the hype, the mirage and persona

that one creates in order to be attractive wears away with time, which leaves the public unfairly and ruthlessly critical of someone they once adored and admired. Being painted for this exhibition was extremely exciting and a great honour and I couldn't be more happy with the result.”

Genevieve Garner





DELILAH

(Alshamsha Heath), oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm

Delilah has come to epitomise the treacherous and cunning femme fatale. Madlyn Kahr says, “Samson loved Delilah, she betrayed him, and, what is worse, she did it for money.”

She was approached by the lords of the Philistines, to discover the secret of Samson’s strength, “and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver”. Three times she asked Samson for the secret of his strength, and three times he gave her a false answer. On the fourth occasion he gave her the true reason: that he did not cut his hair in fulfillment of a vow to God; and Delilah, when Samson was asleep on her knees, called up her man to shave off the seven locks from his head, then betrayed him to his enemies: “the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house”.

She has been the inspiration for countless works of art, depicting the dangers of the seductress, but John Milton personified her as a misguided and foolish, but sympathetic temptress, much like his view of Eve.

LILITH

(Grace Saunders), oil on canvas, 75 x 100 cm

Lilith was Adam's wife before Eve. Medieval Rabbis suggested that Eve and the first woman were two separate individuals to resolve the discrepancy between two distinct accounts of the creation. The first account says God created them male and female, which has been assumed by critical scholars to imply simultaneous creation, whereas the second account states that God created Eve from Adam's rib because Adam was lonely. This rabbinic tradition held that the first woman refused to take the submissive position to Adam in sex, and eventually fled from him, consequently leaving him lonely. This first woman was identified as Lilith.

“After God created Adam, who was alone, He said, ‘It is not good for man to be alone.’ He then created a woman for Adam, from the earth, as He had created Adam himself, and called her Lilith. Adam and Lilith immediately began to fight. She said, ‘I will not lie below;’ and he said, ‘I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while I am to be the superior one.’ Lilith responded, ‘We are equal to each other inasmuch as we were both created from the earth.’ But they would not listen to one another. When Lilith saw this, she pronounced the Ineffable Name and flew away into the air.”

from The Alphabet of Ben Sira



MADAME DE POMPADOUR

(Jo Wood), oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm

Madame de Pompadour 1721 –1764, was the official mistress of Louis XV. At the age of nineteen, she was married to the nephew of her guardian. Beautiful and witty, her young husband was infatuated and they had two children, a boy who died the year after his birth and a girl. She founded a salon and was friends with Voltaire.

Her family were delighted, but her husband heartbroken, when the King installed her as his mistress at Versailles, making her a marquise. Contrary to popular belief, she never had much direct political influence. However, she did wield considerable power behind the scenes and had many enemies among the courtiers and was publicly blamed for the Seven Years' War at the time of her death.

There were several reasons for her lasting influence over Louis. Firstly, she established a cordial relationship with the Queen who had been snubbed by the King's previous mistresses. She also brought fun and companionship into the life of the King. Lastly, she continuously reminded Louis of her beauty by commissioning paintings, mostly by Boucher, that

highlighted her exquisite features and hid her ageing looks. An accomplished woman, she was a great patron of the arts, and had a keen interest in literature.

Madame de Pompadour suffered two miscarriages and is said to have arranged lesser mistresses for the King's pleasure to replace herself. Although they ceased being lovers after 1750, they remained friends, and Louis XV was devoted to her until her death from tuberculosis in 1764 at the age of forty-two.

"As a fan of Marie Antoinette I felt drawn to sit as Madam de Pompadour. When Alice asked me to reveal as she did I felt compelled to do it ...I loved sitting and lying for Alice!"

Jo Wood

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

(Jo Wood), oil on glass (miniature) 11 x 8 cm

The Marquise de Pompadour was a great patron of Boucher. His paintings of her celebrate her beauty but make her look more like a cultured wife than a mistress. Boucher gained lasting notoriety through private commissions for wealthy collectors, creating licentious portraits of the 'Odalisques'. Alas no such portraits of the Marquise exist.





MARIE ANTOINETTE

(Emilia Fox), oil on canvas, 75 x 100 cm

Marie Antoinette 1755–1793 became Dauphine de France at the age of 14 and Queen of France in 1774. The penultimate of 15 children, her relationship with her mother was one of awe-inspired fear, and a lack of supervision meant she could barely read or write properly by the time she was twelve. After a smallpox outbreak, she became the only potential bride in the family and was married to Louis by proxy. The ceremonial wedding took place in 1770, but the lack of consummation remained an issue for seven years. She also suffered several miscarriages.

The Dauphine herself was popular among the people who were easily charmed by her personality and beauty. At Court, however, the match was not popular due to the long-standing tensions between Austria and France. She also had to contend with constant letters from her mother, criticising her for her inability to “inspire passion” in her husband, who rarely slept with her, being more interested in his hobbies.

She began to spend more on gambling and clothing, and the image of a licentious, spendthrift, empty-headed foreign queen quickly took root in the French psyche. Her situation became more precarious when her sister-in-law gave birth to a son. She was wrongly blamed for France’s lack of money, as in reality there had been too many expensive wars, the too-large royal family’s frivolous expenditure far exceeded hers, and many aristocrats were unwilling to defray the costs of the government out of their own pockets. In 1778 she gave birth to a daughter, after a particularly difficult labour, where she collapsed from suffocation and haemorrhaging as her bedroom was packed with courtiers watching the birth, and the doctor aiding her supposedly caused the excessive bleeding by accident. In 1781 she finally gave birth to a son.

Later she began to abandon her more carefree activities to become more involved in politics, firstly to ensure her children’s futures as leaders of France, secondly to improve the dissolute image she had acquired and thirdly,

the King had begun to withdraw from a decision making role in government due to the onset of an acute case of depression. However her primary concern was the health of the Dauphin who was suffering from tuberculosis. During the severe 1788–1789 winter his condition worsened, riots broke out in Paris in April, and on 26 March, Louis XVI almost died from a fall off the roof. The seven-year old Dauphin passed away on 4 June.

At the height of the French Revolution, Louis was deposed and the royal family imprisoned. Marie Antoinette was tried, convicted of treason and executed by guillotine nine months after her husband. Her body was thrown into an unmarked grave but later exhumed and buried in the necropolis of French Kings at the Basilica of St Denis.

“I had no idea what to expect as I walked through Alice’s front door to sit for her. I didn’t even know I had been asked to sit as Marie Antoinette, which presented a challenge to Alice as I was eight months pregnant. In fact, I think it turned to our advantage, as children seem to play a large part in Marie Antoinette’s life, and the vulnerable side of her, which we are rarely allowed to glimpse because of the frivolous and dramatic way history tends to relate her life (especially in classrooms or dramas). There is such a tragic side to her, the relationship she had with her mother, her husband, her miscarriages, and what happened to the Dauphin. Suddenly it seemed very appropriate to be pregnant, and as with all Alice’s paintings she captures something ‘other’ of these Fallen Women, that might not have been portrayed before. By the end of the sitting I felt like I had known Alice for a long time - testament to her great skill for making you feel you can be at your most open and intimate despite barely knowing each other. In that moment, I think she captures so beautifully the history and characters of these Fallen Women and brings them into contemporary consciousness. I am in total awe of her work and the incredible women she has used to inspire her, both historically and present day.”

Emilia Fox



CATHERINE DE MEDICI

(India Knight), oil on canvas, 75 x 100 cm

Catherine de Medici was born in Florence, Italy. Both of her parents, died within weeks of her birth. In 1533, at the age of fourteen, Catherine married the future King Henry II of France.

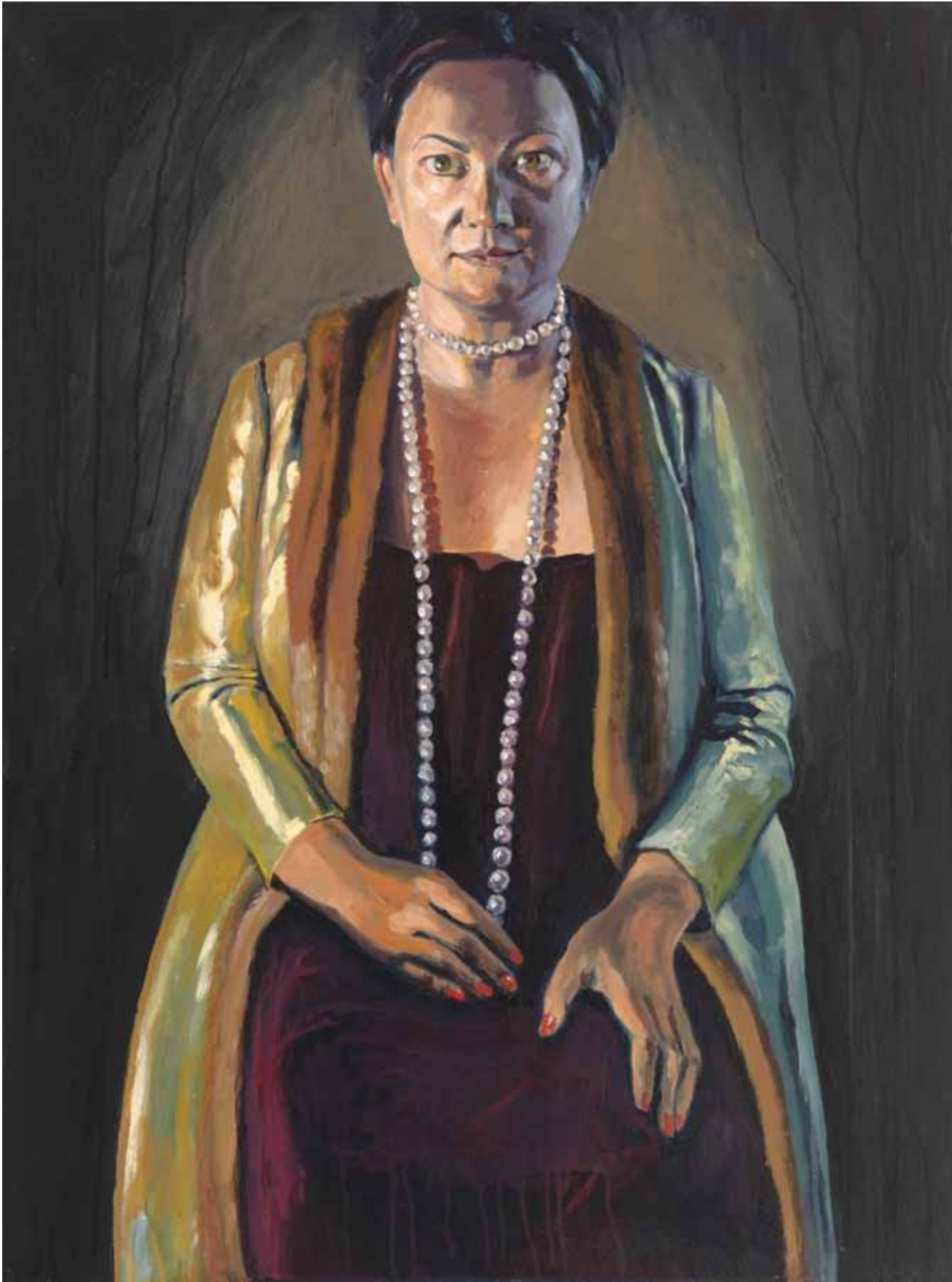
Throughout his reign, Henry excluded Catherine from influence and instead showered favours on his mistress, Diane de Poitiers. Henry's death in 1559 thrust Catherine into the political arena as mother of the frail fifteen-year-old King Francis II. When he died in 1560, she became regent on behalf of her ten-year-old son King Charles IX and was granted sweeping powers. After Charles died in 1574, Catherine played a key role in the reign of her third son, Henry III. He dispensed with her advice only in the last months of her life.

Catherine's three sons reigned in an age of almost constant civil and religious war in France. The problems facing the monarchy were complex and daunting. At first, Catherine compromised and made concessions to the rebelling Protestants, or Huguenots, as they became known. She failed, however, to grasp

the theological issues that drove their movement. Later, she resorted in frustration and anger to hard-line policies against them. In return, she came to be blamed for the excessive persecutions carried out under her sons' rule, in particular for the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572, in which thousands of Huguenots were killed in Paris and throughout France.

Some recent historians have excused Catherine from blame for the worst decisions of the crown, though evidence for her ruthlessness can be found in her letters. In practice, her authority was always limited by the effects of the civil wars. Her policies, therefore, may be seen as desperate measures to keep the Valois monarchy on the throne at all costs, and her spectacular patronage of the arts as an attempt to glorify a monarchy whose prestige was in steep decline. Without Catherine, it is unlikely that her sons would have remained in power. The years in which they reigned have been called "the age of Catherine de Medici".





LOLA MONTEZ

(Lisa Moran Parker), oil on canvas, 75 x 100 cm

Lola Montez was an Irish-born dancer and actress who became famous as a Spanish dancer, courtesan and mistress of King Ludwig I of Bavaria. Her hedonistic lifestyle earned her such public hatred that she was run out of the country and she is credited with contributing to the fall of the Bavarian monarchy.

Aged sixteen Lola eloped with Lieutenant Thomas James. The couple separated five years later and she became a professional dancer under a stage name. A scandal arose and she departed for the Continent, where she became famous more for her beauty and quick temper than for her dancing. At this time she was almost certainly accepting favours from a few wealthy men, and was regarded by many as a courtesan.

She met and had an affair with Franz Liszt, who introduced her to the circle of George Sand, one of the most sophisticated and advanced in European society. After the death of her lover in a duel (unrelated to her), she left Paris for Munich, where she became the mistress of Ludwig I of Bavaria.

Her influence on the king and this, coupled with her arrogant manner and outbursts of temper, made her unpopular with the local population and her relationship with Ludwig is cited as causing the fall from grace of the previously popular king. In 1848 Ludwig abdicated, and Lola fled Bavaria, her career as a power behind the throne at an end.

Lola moved to London where she married a young cavalry officer with a recent inheritance. But the terms of her divorce did not permit remarriage while the other was living, and the newlyweds were forced to flee the country to escape a bigamy action, residing for a time in France and Spain. Within two years the tempestuous relationship was over and Lola set off for the United States, performing as a dancer and actress

before marrying a local newspaperman. This marriage failed shortly after and she departed for a tour of Australia where she performed her erotic Spider Dance at the Theatre Royal in Melbourne, reportedly raising her skirts so high that the audience could see she wore no underclothing (actually a salacious rumour).

On her return to America, she did some acting and lectured on gallantry. She finally moved to New York, where she lived out her last days visiting outcasts of her own sex. She died one month short of her fortieth birthday.

"I met Alice at a party and she asked me to sit for her straightaway. I thought she was a very nice, if slightly bonkers, person when she asked me to be one of her subjects, but she persisted and it was such a very special experience. If I recall, I didn't really choose to be Lola Montez – it was just obvious when Alice showed me the images inspiring her Fallen Women series that I resembled the saucy Lola more than the others, though I am in life no dancer or destroyer of monarchies.

Sitting for Alice was such an honour. Watching her project the character onto me was absolutely fascinating and having got to know her better in the past year, it is clear to me that she is not bonkers, but instead a serious artist with an extremely strong and personal vision."

Lisa Moran Parker



GRÁINNE THE PIRATE QUEEN

(Anne Clarke), oil on canvas, 75 x 100 cm

Gráinne Ní Mháille or “The Pirate Queen” was a wealthy and powerful figure in 16th century Irish history. The daughter of a chieftan she is know for her daring exploits, piracy and promiscuity.

According to Irish legend, as a young girl she wished to go on a trading expedition to Spain with her father, and on being told she could not because her long hair would catch in the ship’s ropes, she cut off most of her hair to embarrass her father into taking her.

Gráinne had two husbands and four children, her last son was created first Viscount Mayo by Charles I. She was accused of promiscuity, and it was said that she may have had a son out of wedlock, however allegations such as these were frequently made against women who acted in a manner contrary to the social norms of the day.

In the later 16th century English power steadily increased in Ireland and in 1593, when her first two sons, and her half-brother were taken captive Gráinne sailed to England to petition Elizabeth I for their release. She met with Elizabeth at Greenwich Palace, wearing a fine gown. Elizabeth apparently took to Gráinne, who was three years older, and the two women reached sufficient agreement for Elizabeth to grant her requests provided that her support of the many Irish rebellions and piracy against England ended. However within a short period of time it appears that both parties reneged.

Gráinne most likely died at Rockfleet Castle around 1603, the same year as Elizabeth.



“An Irish female pirate! What a brilliant character. I love her utter disregard for the rules, her determination and pluck. Gráinne was a bit of a chancer and she went out and grabbed life; she made things happen. I can’t say I’m as much of a renegade as Gráinne was but it was fun trying to get inside her head.”

“Sitting for Alice was magical because her process is fascinating. I felt transported as I tried to think how Gráinne might have thought and project her character outwards. It’s an experience I’ll always treasure.”

Anne Clarke



HELEN OF TROY

(Lola Lennox), oil on canvas, 75 x 100 cm

Helen of Troy was the most beautiful woman in the world and was the daughter of Zeus and Leda (or Nemesis). Her abduction by Paris brought about the Trojan War. She was described by Dr. Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's eponymous play as having "the face that launched a thousand ships."

Helen was married to Menelaus, but after Aphrodite had promised Paris, a Trojan prince, the most beautiful woman in the world as his wife Paris came to Sparta to claim Helen.

Although Helen is sometimes depicted as being unwillingly raped by Paris, Sappho argues that Helen willingly left behind Menelaus and Hermione, her nine-year-old daughter, to be with Paris, thus beginning the Trojan War.

Homer paints a poignant, lonely picture of Helen in Troy. She is filled with self-distaste and regret for what she has caused and as she gradually realises Paris' weakness. However, portraits of Helen in Troy seem to contradict each other. From one side, we read about the treacherous Helen who simulated Bacchic rites and rejoiced over the carnage of Trojans. On the other hand, there is another Helen, lonely and helpless; desperate to find sanctuary, while Troy is on fire.

When Menelaus finally found her, he raised his sword to kill her as he had demanded that only he should slay his unfaithful wife; but, when he was ready to do so, she dropped her robe from her shoulders, and the sight of her beauty caused him to let the sword drop from his hand.

Helen returned to Sparta with Menelaus.

"I am in a transition period in my life and this painting illustrates it. Transcending from a girl to a woman, knowing my desires and ambitions but not yet achieving them (as the other women in the exhibition have done). As Alice and I talked of these things, she painted a pensive yet direct expression in my face. Despite my lack of clothes and dark rich colours the portrait doesn't feel overtly sexual. Whilst painting, Alice gets to know her subjects and despite their being half naked I feel each woman's personality shines through over their sexuality."

Lola Lennox



LADY HARRIET MORDAUNT

(Joanna Berryman), oil on canvas, 60 x 92 cm

Lady Harriet Mordaunt, was the daughter of a Scottish baronet. She married Sir Charles Mordaunt on 7 December 1866. Sir Charles was a stolid country squire who spent his time hunting, shooting and fishing or sitting in Parliament, while Harriet entertained numerous lovers, including the future King Edward VII and several of his aristocratic friends.

In 1869, Harriet gave birth to an illegitimate daughter, and then confessed everything to Sir Charles, who was enraged and sued for divorce. The historical record shows that the Prince of Wales was never named as a correspondent in the divorce case, but Mordaunt threatened to do so.

Harriet's father, who had several other daughters to marry off, announced that she was mad. That would prevent a divorce trial and save the family reputation. She was incarcerated in various rented houses, and after some weeks either broke down or agreed to feign madness: smashing plates, eating coal, howling and crawling. The case was brought to court and the Prince of Wales was called as a witness, he admitted visiting Lady Mordaunt but nothing further was proved.

In 1875, Sir Charles sued again. Viscount Cole (father of Harriet's child) pled guilty to adultery with her, so Sir Charles got his divorce. Sir Charles married again, on 24 April 1878, to Mary Louisa Cholmondeley, a 16-year old parson's daughter.

Harriet was kept in asylums for the rest of her remaining 36 years.

"The harrowing circumstances surrounding my character's incarceration and her subsequent death were resonant throughout my sitting. I felt enraged, powerless and quite muted in moments.

"To be shoved into the periphery of existence based on these grounds seems unthinkable. I have a real appreciation for the age we live in and the relative freedom of expression most women have now. Madonna and Magdalene archetypes are obsolete and we can comfortably inhabit both if we so desire. My voice is the most fundamental part of who I am. Lady Mordaunt had her's usurped by the key men in her life, rendering her ineffective and inhuman.

"Under Alice's watchful and nurturing gaze these emotions eventually lifted. I relaxed into the role of being a sexually charged woman consciously not allowing full surrender; it felt appropriate to draw strength from a little self protection."

Jo Berryman





THEDA BARA

(Claudia Winkleman), oil on canvas, 60 x 92 cm

Theda Bara (1885 – 1955) was an American silent film actress. One of the most popular screen actresses of her era, she was one of cinema's earliest sex symbols. Her femme fatale roles earned her the nickname "The Vamp" (short for vampire). The term "vamp" soon became a popular slang term for a sexually predatory woman.

One of the first stars to be heavily promoted by a studio, she was in reality a Jewish girl from Ohio. The studios promoted her as the Egyptian-born daughter of a French actress and an Italian sculptor. They claimed she had spent her early years in the Sahara Desert under the shadow of the Sphinx, then moved to France to become a stage actress. In fact, Bara had never even been to Egypt or France. They also called her the "Serpent of the Nile" and encouraged her to discuss mysticism and the occult in interviews.

Bara was and still is well known for wearing extremely revealing costumes in her films, which were very controversial for their time, and can still be considered risqué by today's standards, more than 90 years later. But she is most famous for having a higher percentage of lost films than any other actor/actress with a Hollywood star on the Walk of Fame. One of the world's most famous movie stars at the time, she made more than 40 films between 1914 and 1926. Complete prints of only six of these films still exist.

"I loved sitting for Alice. We drank tea and talked about Theda Bara and I wore a fake fur stole. It was win win."

Claudia Winkleman



MATA HARI

(Alice Temperley), oil on canvas, 60 x 92 cm

Mata Hari (1876 – 1917), was the stage name of Margaretha MacLeod, a Dutch exotic dancer, courtesan, and accused spy who, although possibly innocent, was executed for espionage for Germany during World War I.

She had a privileged early childhood but her parents divorced after her father went bankrupt, and her mother died when she was 15. Aged 18, she answered a newspaper advertisement placed by an army officer looking for a wife. They moved to the Dutch East Indies and had two children. She studied Indonesian traditions and joined a local dance company. However her husband was a violent alcoholic twice her age who openly kept both a native wife and a concubine. Her son died aged two, possibly of complications relating to syphilis contracted from his parents. The couple divorced with Margaretha losing custody of her daughter (who later died, also possibly from complications relating to syphilis).

Margaretha moved to Paris and began to win fame as an exotic dancer, adopting the stage name Mata Hari, Indonesian for “sun”. Promiscuous, flirtatious, and openly flaunting her body, she captivated her audiences, posing as a Java princess. She was photographed

numerous times during this period, nude or nearly so. Although the claims about her origins were fictitious, the act was spectacularly successful because it elevated exotic dance to a more respectable status, and so broke new ground in a style of entertainment for which Paris was later to become world famous.

She had relationships with powerful men in many countries, including the German crown prince. Prior to WWI, she was generally viewed as a freespirted bohemian, but as war approached, she began to be seen as a dangerous seductress. The circumstances around her alleged spying activities are still unclear. Mata Hari claimed she had been paid to act as a French spy but had neglected to inform her French spymasters of a prior arrangement with the German consul. In 1917 she was arrested and put on trial accused of spying for Germany. Found guilty she was executed by firing squad at the age of 41. The official documents were sealed for 100 years, but were opened in 1985, revealing that she was innocent. Her body was not claimed, so was used for medical study. Her head was embalmed and kept in the Museum of Anatomy in Paris, but in 2000, archivists discovered it had disappeared, possibly as early as 1954.

MATA HARI

(Alice Temperley), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm



“A decadent life, perceived as being all decorative and bejeweled; behind a real sadness and a life which needed her escapism through the fantasy-full life she led. We all need to dream, we all need to find our path. Decadence and surrounding oneself with beauty and fantasy can take you to another place no matter how short lived it is.”

Alice Temperley



CLEOPATRA

(Alia Al-Senussi), oil on canvas, 60 x 92 cm

Cleopatra was the last effective pharaoh of Egypt's Ptolemaic dynasty. She originally shared power with her father and later with her brothers, whom she also married, but eventually gained sole rule.

As Pharaoh, she consummated a liaison with Gaius Julius Caesar that solidified her grip on the throne. She later elevated her son with Caesar, Caesarion, to co-ruler in name.

After Caesar's assassination in 44 BC, she aligned with Mark Antony in opposition to Caesar's legal heir Gaius Julius Caesar Octavian (later known as

Augustus). With Antony she bore the twins Cleopatra Selene II and Alexander Helios, and another son, Ptolemy Philadelphus. Her successive unions with her brothers produced no children. After losing the Battle of Actium to Octavian's forces, Antony committed suicide. Cleopatra soon followed suit, according to tradition killing herself by means of an asp bite on August 12, 30 BC. She was briefly outlived by Caesarion, who was declared pharaoh, but he was soon killed on Octavian's orders. Egypt became the Roman province of Aegyptus.

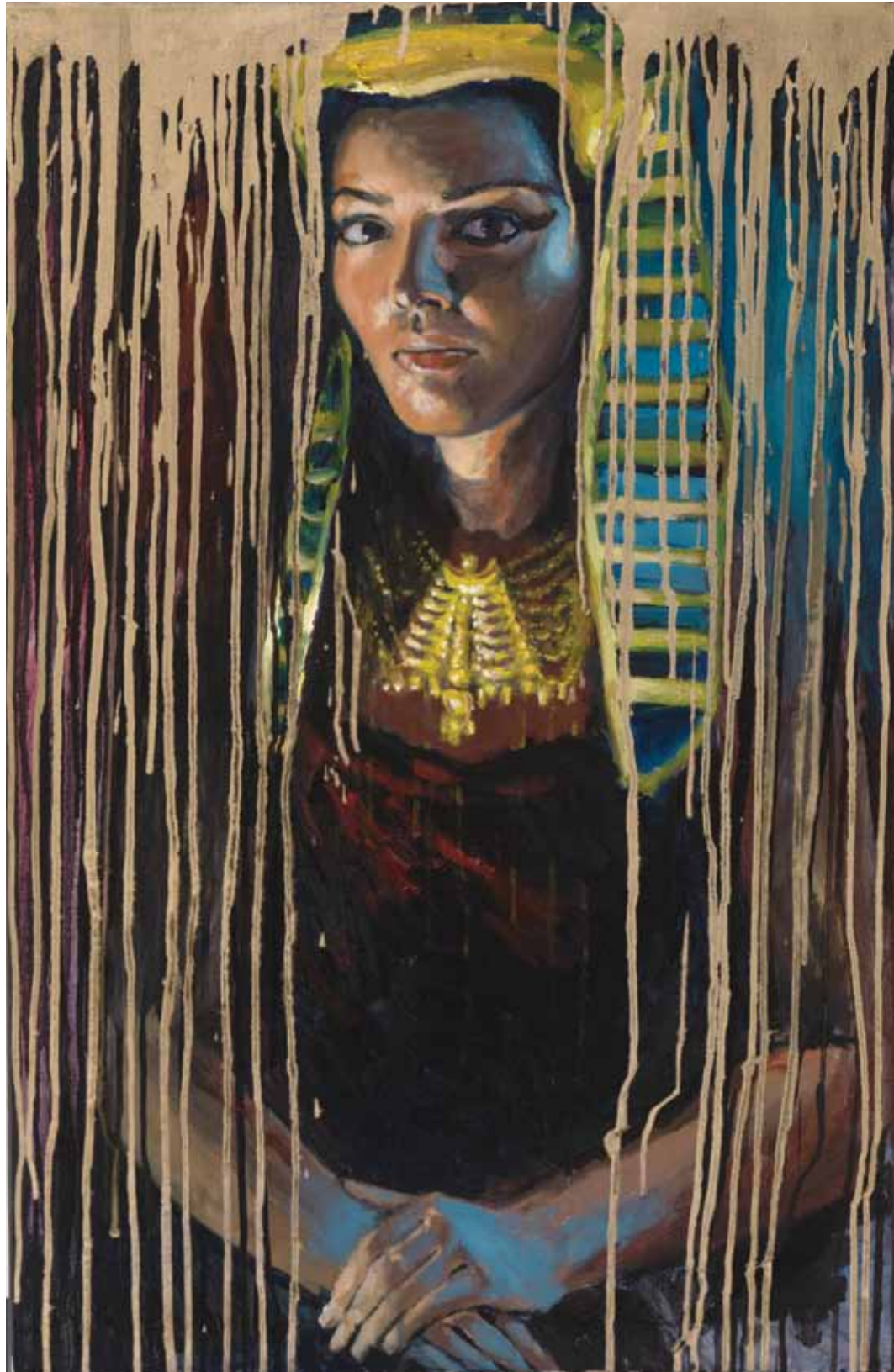
"My fascination with Cleopatra is rooted in the legendary yet very real oasis of Siwa. Throughout history Siwa has been a magical place that launches myths as well as realities. It was said Cleopatra visited the Oracle there and bathed in the healing waters that spring from the Sahara to give this fertile patch of desert its green date palms and salt banks.

"My adult life was foreseen there as Siwa was the starting point for my journey through the art world. I had just completed my dissertation and been awarded my master's when I travelled to Siwa to work with the Siwa Patrons Project and the celebrated artists, Ilya and Emilia Kabakon. Siwa lies on the border of Egypt and

Libya. Cleopatra has always been claimed as an Egyptian (with her son, the last of the Ptolemaic dynasty) and I am Libyan but the closest I have been to my country is in fact Siwa.

"Visiting Siwa makes one realise that national borders in the desert really are nothing more than a line in the sand. Cleopatra serves as an inspiration, a legend and a myth. For me, my small bond to her is in the ancient springs and sands of Siwa that link Egypt and Libya, Cleopatra and me."

Alia Al-Senussi



FRIGG

(Lil Rudebeck), oil on canvas, 60 x 92 cm

Frigg is a major goddess in Norse paganism. She is said to be the wife of Odin, and is the “foremost among the goddesses” and the queen of Asgard. Frigg appears primarily in Norse mythological stories as a wife and a mother. She is also described as having the power of prophecy yet she does not reveal what she knows and is the only one, other than Odin, who is permitted to sit on his high seat Hlidskjalf and look out over the universe. The English term Friday derives from the Anglo-Saxon name for Frigg, Frige.

The root also appears in Old Saxon, *fri* which means “beloved lady”, in Swedish as *fria* “to propose for marriage” and in Icelandic as *frjá* which means “to love.”

“I started sitting for Alice about six years ago and her imagination has always made sitting for her an adventure - I’ve done everything from pretend to fall down a fire escape, ride on the back of a goose and be beaten up by an abusive husband! It’s rather apt that for this exhibition, I’m pretending to be Frigg - when I sat for the painting I had just become a wife - now I’m just about to become a mother - maybe Frigg had something to do with it.”

Lil Rudebeck



FREYJA

(Sam Atkinson), oil on canvas, 60 x 92 cm

In Norse mythology, Freyja is goddess of love, beauty, fertility, gold, magic, prophecies, attraction, war, and death. Freyja is the owner of the necklace Brísingamen, rides a chariot driven by two cats, owns the boar Hildisvíni, possesses a cloak of falcon feathers, and, by her husband Óðr, is the mother of two daughters.

Freyja rules over her heavenly afterlife field Fólkvangr and there receives half of those that die in battle, whereas the other half go to the god Odin's hall, Valhalla. She assists other deities by allowing them to use her feathered cloak, is invoked in matters of fertility and love, and is frequently sought after by powerful jötnar who wish to make her their wife. Freyja's husband, the god Óðr, is frequently absent. She cries tears of red gold for him, and searches for him under assumed names.

Freyja's name appears in numerous place names in Scandinavia, with a high concentration in southern Sweden. Various plants in Scandinavia once bore her name but were replaced with the name of the Virgin Mary during the process of Christianisation.

"I had never sat for an artist before, so the prospect of doing so would have been daunting at the best of times, but I had also recently given birth to my first child. A day or two before the appointment I did wonder if I had taken leave of my sanity. But somehow Alice turned what might otherwise have been an ordeal into what seemed at the time like a good matter between close friends. When I saw how she had painted me I was so flattered. Alice had captured me in such a sensuous light, even though what little I was wearing were my standard issue whites from M&S."

Sam Atkinson



USHAS

(Lisa Moran Parker), oil on canvas, 60 x 92 cm

Ushas, Sanskrit for “dawn” is a Vedic deity, and consequently a Hindu deity as well. Ushas is an exalted divinity in the Rig Veda, sometimes spoken of in the plural, “the Dawns.” She is portrayed as welcoming birds and warding off evil spirits, and as a beautifully adorned young woman riding in a golden chariot on her path across the sky.

Twenty of the 1028 hymns of the Rig Veda are dedicated to the Dawn.

The radiant Dawns have risen up for glory, in their white splendour like the waves of waters.

She maketh paths all easy, fair to travel, and, rich, hath shown herself benign and friendly.

We see that thou art good: far shines thy lustre; thy beams, thy splendours have flown up to heaven.

Decking thyself, thou makest bare thy bosom, shining in majesty, thou Goddess Morning.



THE MINIATURES

ELIZABETH I

(Annie Lennox), oil on glass (miniature) 8 x 11 cm

Elizabeth I was Queen of England and Queen of Ireland from 17 November 1558 until her death. Sometimes called the Virgin Queen, Gloriana, or Good Queen Bess, Elizabeth was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor dynasty. The daughter of Henry VIII, she was born a princess, but her mother, Anne Boleyn, was executed two and a half years after her birth, and Elizabeth was declared illegitimate.

"Alice is one of the sweetest people I've ever met...I had such fun sitting for the first portrait she painted of me, as we chatted and listened to the warbling strains of Edith Piaf ...I didn't have a chance to sit for her miniature, but by God it's a great likeness..."



"I'm terribly flattered that she thought of a ruff and crown for me... last time I was in my underwear!"

Annie Lennox

'CUTLASS LIZ' SHIRLAND

(Shami Chakrabarti), oil on glass (miniature) 8 x 11 cm

Various histories exist regarding Elizabeth Shirland or 'Cutlass Liz'. One version is that she was born in Devon between 1550 and 1560 and in her early teens cast off her skirts and chose a life at sea. Beginning in 1577, she served under Drake aboard the Golden Hinde, the voyage that made him a national hero.

The details of how Shirland went from seaman to captain are vague. Women at sea, either living openly as women or disguised as men or boys, were in no way as unusual as many modern writers would have us believe. The sea offered an alternative to prostitution in a time of economic hardship for the majority of the population and there was the egalitarianism of what was to become the Royal Navy. However, women as sea captains were a rare breed.

Liz revealed her sex to her crew early on and took lovers from amongst them. If they displeased her in some way, she killed them with her cutlass. However, her crew betrayed her to their Spanish enemies and her ship was boarded in a night raid and Shirland was

dragged, naked and screaming, from her cabin to be dispatched directly by the Spanish. This only after she killed her lover who was one of her betrayers.



"I love the idea of Elizabeth "Cutlass Liz" Shirland, not least because her story might be legend. The idea of a woman serving on Drake's Golden Hinde in the 1500s and going on to captain her own ship is more credible than first meets the twenty-first century eye. It also reminds us of the blurred line between patriotic heroism and piracy."

Shami Chakrabarti

PANDORA

(Lara Bohinc), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm

In Greek mythology, Pandora was the first woman. As Hesiod related it, each god helped create her by giving her unique gifts. Zeus ordered Hephaestus to mould her out of Earth as part of the punishment of mankind for Prometheus' theft of the secret of fire, and all the gods joined in offering her "seductive gifts". Her other name, inscribed against her figure in the British Museum, is Anesidora, "she who sends up gifts," up implying "from below" within the earth.

According to the myth, Pandora opened a jar, in modern accounts sometimes mistranslated as "Pandora's box", releasing all the evils of mankind - although the particular evils, aside from plagues and diseases, are not specified in detail by Hesiod - leaving only Hope inside once she had closed it again. She opened the jar out of simple curiosity and not as a malicious act.



The myth of Pandora is ancient, appears in several distinct Greek versions, and has been interpreted in many ways. In all literary versions, however, the myth is a kind of theodicy, addressing the question of why there is evil in the world. In the seventh century BC, Hesiod gives the earliest literary version of the Pandora story; however, there is an older mention of jars or urns containing blessings and evils bestowed upon mankind in Homer's *Iliad*.

HARRIETTE WILSON

(Maggie Zownir), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm

Harriette Wilson became famous for her sex appeal, tenacity, and uncanny ability to blackmail. Born in 1786, the daughter of a clockmaker, she became the mistress of Lord William Craven at the age of 15. She later became the mistress of the Prince of Wales and her extravagant lifestyle was avidly reported by the press. Educating herself at every opportunity, she also became a fashion icon of her time, but was wracked with debt.

She retired in her thirties and to alleviate her debts wrote a tell-all memoir discussing all the famous men she slept with and salacious anecdotes about other ladies of society. She sent letters to everyone mentioned in her manuscript asking for 200 pounds to have their names blacked out. However the Duke of Wellington famously responded: "publish and be damned." She responded by publishing, and next to the Duke of Wellington's name wrote: "[he] has sighed over me and groaned over me by the hour..."



When she died in 1845 Harriette had just converted to Catholicism. One of her few mourners was her old amour, Henry Brougham, former Lord Chancellor, who arranged her funeral.

LETTICE KNOLLYS

(Anita Zabłudowicz), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm

Lettice Knollys, Countess of Essex and Countess of Leicester (1543[1]–1634), was an English noblewoman and mother to the courtiers Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex and Lady Penelope Rich. Due to her marriage to Elizabeth I's favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, she incurred the Queen's undying hatred.

A grandniece of Anne Boleyn and close to Princess Elizabeth since childhood, Lettice Knollys was introduced early into court life. At 17 she married Walter Devereux, Viscount Hereford, who in 1572 became Earl of Essex. After her husband went to Ireland in 1573 she possibly became involved with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Two years after Essex died of dysentery in Ireland Lettice married Robert Dudley in private. The Queen banished her from court and the couple's son died at the age of three to the great grief of his parents. Their union was nevertheless a happy one, as was her third marriage to the much younger Sir Christopher Blount only six months



after the Earl's death. She continued to style herself Lady Leicester. The Countess was richly left under Leicester's will despite his debts, but was helpless at the political eclipse of her eldest son, the second Earl of Essex, she lost both him and her third husband to the executioner in 1601. In reasonably good health until the end, she died aged 91 on Christmas Day.

"I am totally fascinated by Tudor women. They lived in a man's world and had to use every resource that was available to them, physically and mentally, to survive."

Anita Zabłudowicz

LIVIA AUGUSTA

(Sarah Atkinson), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm

Livia Augusta, Empress of Rome, was one of the most fascinating, perplexing and powerful figures of the ancient world.

Wife and advisor to the Emperor Augustus, she was also the mother of the Emperor Tiberius, great-grandmother to both the Emperor Caligula and the Emperor Nero, and grandmother of the Emperor Claudius. She was deified by Claudius (Augustus) who acknowledged her title of Augusta.

As second wife to Augustus and the mother of his successor Tiberius, Livia has been vilified by posterity (most notably by Tacitus and Robert Graves) as the quintessence of the scheming Roman matriarch, poisoning her relatives one by one to smooth her son's



path to the imperial throne. New research reveals that far from being the crudely drawn caricature of the popular imagination, she was a complex, courageous and richly gifted woman whose true crime was not murder but the exercise of power, and who, in a male-dominated society, had the energy to create for herself both a prominent public profile and a significant sphere of political influence.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

(Lil Rudebeck), oil on glass (miniature) 8 x 11 cm

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759 – 1797) was an eighteenth-century British writer, philosopher, and advocate of women's rights. She is best known for *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), in which she argues that women are not naturally inferior to men, but appear to be only because they lack education.

Until the late 20th century, Wollstonecraft's life received more attention than her writing. After two ill-fated affairs, with Henry Fuseli and Gilbert Imlay (by whom she had a daughter, Fanny Imlay), Wollstonecraft married the philosopher William Godwin, one of the forefathers of the anarchist movement. She died at the age of thirty-eight, ten days after giving birth to her second daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, later Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*.



After Wollstonecraft's death, her widower published a *Memoir* (1798) of her life, revealing her unorthodox lifestyle, which inadvertently destroying her reputation for almost a century. The emergence of the feminist movement rehabilitated her as one of the founding feminist philosophers.

LADY MACBETH

(Baukjen de Swaan Arons), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm



Lady Macbeth is a character in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (c.1603-1607). She is the wife to the play's antagonist, Macbeth, a Scottish nobleman. After goading him into committing regicide, she becomes Queen of Scotland, and later suffers pangs of guilt for her part in the crime. She dies off-stage in the last act, an apparent suicide.

Analysts see in the character of Lady Macbeth the conflict between feminine and masculine. Lady Macbeth suppresses her instincts toward compassion, motherhood, and fragility - associated with femininity - in favour of ambition, ruthlessness, and a lust for power. This conflict colours the entire drama, and sheds light on gender-based preconceptions from Shakespearean England to the present.

ELEANOR OF ACQUITAINE

(Cherie Blair), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm

Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204) was one of the most powerful women in Europe during the Middle Ages. She succeeded her father as Duchess of Aquitaine and Countess of Poitiers at the age of fifteen, and thus became the most eligible bride in Europe. Three months later she married Louis VII, King of France. They participated in the unsuccessful Second Crusade, but soon after agreed to dissolve their marriage, because of Eleanor's desire for divorce and because the only children they had were two daughters.

The royal marriage was annulled in 1152. Their daughters were declared legitimate and custody of them awarded to Louis, while Eleanor's lands were restored to her. Eight weeks later Eleanor married the eleven years younger Henry II, who became King of England in 1154, with Eleanor as Queen. She bore Henry eight children: five sons, two of whom would become king, and three daughters. However, Henry and Eleanor eventually became estranged and Eleanor was imprisoned.

"I first sat for Alice when she was starting out and we were living in Downing Street and we have remained friends. When she asked me to sit for her latest exhibition of notorious women from history I was immediately interested in her idea, and we discussed various women that I felt inspired by, who defied the conventions of their times.

"I have been interested in Eleanor of Aquitaine and Katherine Swynford for many years and the reason my daughter Kathryn is named as she is, is because I lost my paternal aunt to breast cancer at the age of 52 and then fell pregnant. After two sons I was desperate for a daughter, so I made a promise that if I was lucky enough to have a girl I would call her Kathryn after the heroine in my aunt's favourite book Katherine, by Anya Seton, so we enlisted Kathryn to sit too and settled on Eleanor for myself.



Following Henry II's death in 1189, their son, Richard the Lionheart, succeeded, immediately releasing his mother. Eleanor acted as a regent while Richard went on the Third Crusade, surviving him and living well into the reign of her youngest son King John. By the time of her death she had outlived all of her children except for John and Eleanor, Queen of Castile.

"Eleanor lived almost a thousand years ago, but because of her wealth and power was able to behave with a freedom that is denied to the majority of women around the world even today. She divorced one husband and took a second 11 years her junior, subsequently plotting against him with one of her sons. On her return to France she ruled over one of the most creative and influential courts of the Medieval period.

"We looked at lots of representations of Eleanor, and discussed the topicality of the medieval fashion for women covering their heads, but ultimately it seemed right that she should be holding a book (as she is on her tomb) to represent her learning and what was undoubtedly a powerful intellect as well as her patronage of some of the great Medieval poets."

Cherie Blair

KATHERINE SWYNFORD

(Kathryn Blair), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm

Katherine Swynford (1350 – 1403) was a powerful figure in the politics of fourteenth-century England and an example of how women were sometimes able to maneuver around convention. She became the third wife of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and their descendants played a major role in the Wars of the Roses. Henry VII, who became King of England in 1485, derived his claim to the throne from his mother, who was a great-granddaughter of Katherine Swynford.

In about 1366 Katherine married “Hugh” Ottes Swynford, their children were Thomas, Blanche, and possibly Margaret Swynford. Katherine became attached to the household of John of Gaunt as governess to his daughters, and he stood as godfather to Blanche. Katherine’s sister, Philippa, attached to the Queen’s household, married the poet Geoffrey Chaucer.

Before the Duke’s second marriage, Katherine and John of Gaunt consummated a romantic affair resulting in four illegitimate children. However, two years after the death of the Duke’s second wife, in 1396, Katherine and John of Gaunt married in Lincoln Cathedral. Their



four children were legitimized as adults by their parents’ marriage with approval by King Richard and the Pope. Katherine survived John by four years.

“Katherine Swynford is my namesake, which is rather appropriate as she lived in an age of namesakes. Her sister Philippa was named after the queen she was lady in waiting to (Katherine’s future mother in law) and Katherine’s daughter Blanche was named after her future husband’s current wife!

“She must have been an exceptional person, as unlike Eleanor of Aquitaine she wasn’t born into a position of power, but rose from being a governess and long term mistress, to Duchess and, as great grandmother to Henry VII, the founder of the Tudor line, the mother of a dynasty.”

Kathryn Blair

MEDEA

(Nicole Farhi), oil on glass (miniature) 7 x 8 cm

In Greek mythology, Medea was the daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis, niece of Circe, granddaughter of the sun god Helios, and later wife to the hero Jason, with whom she had two children: Mermeros and Pheres. She was an enchantress and is often depicted as a priestess of the goddess Hecate.

In Euripides’s play Medea, Jason leaves Medea when Creon, King of Corinth, offers him his daughter, Glauce. The play tells of how Medea gets her revenge on her husband for this betrayal.



CORNIX

oil on glass (miniature) 5 x 6 cm

Cornix is a character in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. There, she recounts how she was once a princess. Neptune saw her walking by the seashore and attempted rape. Minerva, the virgin goddess took pity and transformed her into a crow.

John Gower retold the story in his *Confessio Amantis*, with particular emphasis on her delight in her escape:

*With fetheres blake as eny cole
Out of hise armes in a throne
Sche flih before his ybe a Crowe;
Which was to hire a more delit,
To kepe hire maidenhede whit
Under the wede of fethers blake,
In Perles whyte than forsake
That no lif mai restore ayein.*



FOX

oil on glass (miniature) 6 x 5 cm

In Japanese folklore foxes are depicted as intelligent beings, possessing magical abilities that increase with their age and wisdom. Foremost among these is the ability to assume human form. While some stories speak of trickery, others portray them as faithful guardians, friends, lovers and wives.

Kitsunetsuki literally means the state of being possessed by a fox. The victim is always a young woman, whom the fox enters beneath her fingernails or through her breasts. In Japan, kitsunetsuki was noted as a disease as early as the Heian period and remained a common diagnosis for mental illness until the early 20th century.

Kitsune are commonly portrayed as lovers, usually involving a young human male and a kitsune who takes the form of a human woman. The kitsune may be a seductress, but these stories are more often romantic in nature. Typically, the young man unknowingly marries the fox, who proves a devoted wife. The man eventually discovers the fox's true nature, and the fox-wife is forced to leave him.



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THE ARTIST



Alice Instone makes paintings concerned with gender and power and frequently depicts influential or well known public figures. She started working as an artist in 2005 and lives and works in London. Her solo exhibitions include the House of Commons, Royal Society of Arts, Northampton Museum, Ernst & Young's London headquarters and BBB Gallery Shoreditch. She has had various other joint or group shows and her work is held in several public collections.

The Independent described her as 'young, female and tipped for the top' and she was interviewed by Jenni Murray for Radio 4's Woman's Hour in May 2009. She has been selected as a Woman of Achievement 2010 by Woman of the Year, and was shortlisted for the Women of the Future Award, sponsored by Shell.

The Sunday Telegraph said of her work: 'They are among the most well known women in Britain but the chances are that you have never seen them like this before. Alice Instone's work challenges the way women are traditionally portrayed'.

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www.aliceinstone.com