

Philip de László
Master of Elegance

Catalogue by
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Essays by
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THE
de László
ARCHIVE TRUST

Gainsborough's
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Mrs George Owen Sandys, née Dulcie Edythe Angela Redford, 1915
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Katherine Field
Curator, Senior Editor of the Philip de
László Catalogue Raisonné*

Philip de László - Master of Elegance and its accompanying catalogue is the first to focus on the English career of this gifted artist during a remarkable period in history. It is the culmination of more than twelve years I've spent in the artist's company, which is never dull! It takes only one or a small group of individuals to conceive a project like this but a community to bring it to fruition. There are many people I must thank.

First, I offer my heartfelt thanks to Sandra de Laszlo for her encouragement and advice throughout the project. With the unwavering support of her husband Damon she is unquestionably the bedrock on which the catalogue raisonné and this latest exhibition are built.

Thank you to Mark Bills, former Director of Gainsborough's House, who invited me to curate this exhibition in their beautiful new galleries and to Dr Steven Parissien who made the transition so easy. Both have been inspiring colleagues.

The Gainsborough's House team have been brilliant and enthusiastic to work with, thanks to Emma Boyd, Dr Pat Hardy and Mahaut de la Motte for their attention to detail in facilitating loans and transport.

The de Laszlo Archive team, led by Anna Drumm, have indexed and transcribed thousands of documents. This work provides continuous fresh insights and has enabled me to use newly discovered material to expand our knowledge of the artist and his sitters.

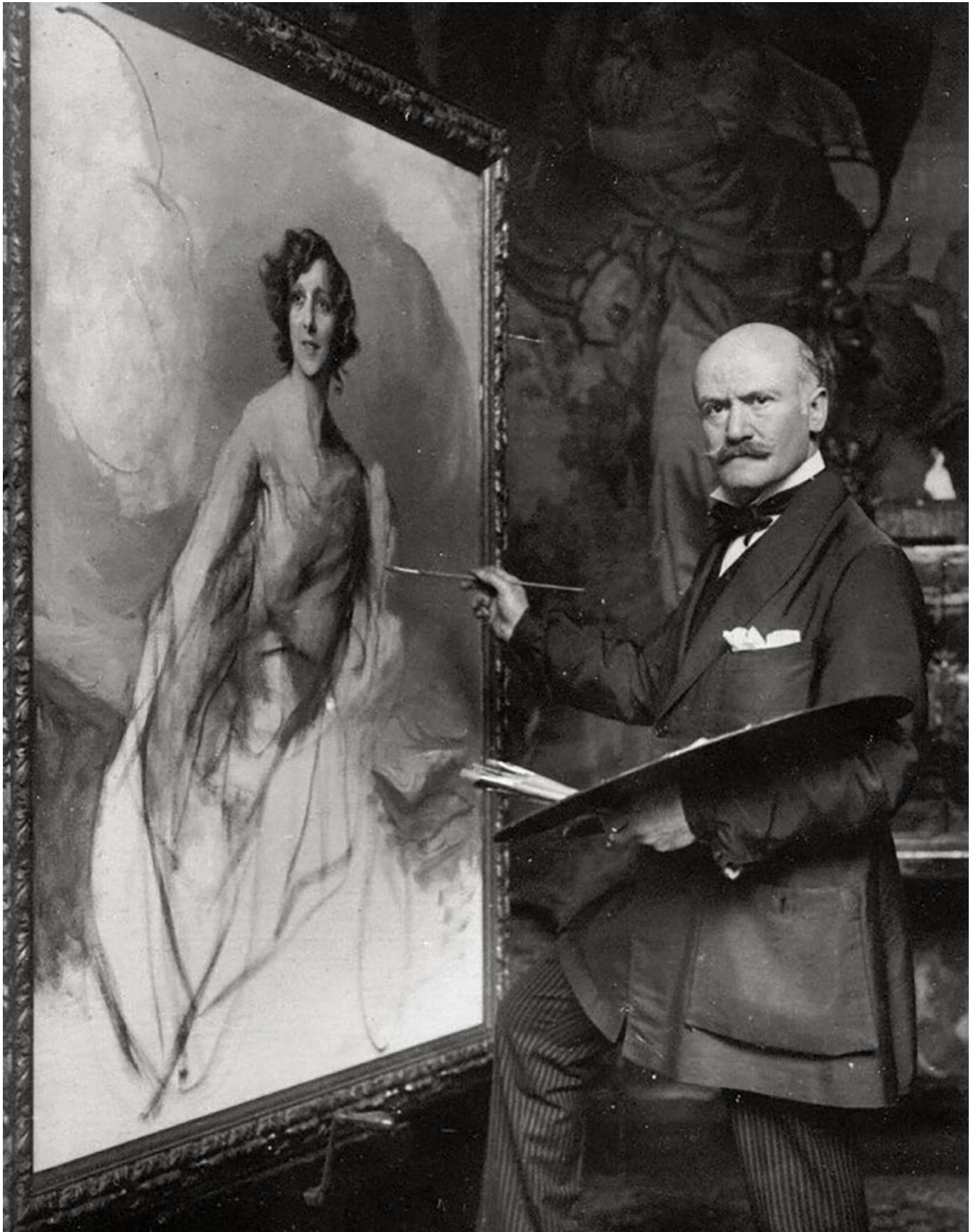
A catalogue of this size is truly a team effort, thank-you to my editors for their sharp eyes and invaluable contributions: Anna, Sandra, Christopher Wentworth-Stanley, Dr Martin Postle and Graham and Jackie Field. Emilia Holt, our photographic editor, who has a brilliant eye for images and the knotty demands of copyright. A special thank-you to Hettie for her amazing calmness in achieving anything asked of her, be it design, invitations, catalogue sales or simply a much-needed laugh in moments of high-stress!

To Steve Hayes for the beautiful design of this catalogue and to Neville Rolt and Blackmore for its production.

It took a trip to Ireland to tie together many aspects of the artist's career in England for this exhibition. It was very special to visit Lucy Guinness' family home near Dublin and walk in her footsteps to St Brigid's church for her wedding day over one hundred years later.

Finally, the exhibition would not have been possible without the generous support of private lenders and public museums and galleries. I would like to thank: His Majesty The King, the Marquess of Cholmondeley, the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church Commissioners for England, Viscount Devonport, Mr John Souglides, Sir Charles Russell, Dr Faisal Kanoo and New Place Hotel, RSA, London, the Haddon Library, Cambridge University and the many kind private owners who wish to remain anonymous.

A special thank you to Cornel Constantin Ilie of the National History Museum of Romania (NHMR) for his extraordinary enthusiasm and inspiration for the loan of one of the artist's masterpieces, *Queen Marie of Romania*, from Peles National Museum and the beautiful gold bracelet given to her by her father from his institution.



The artist painting Lady Crosfield, 1923

PHILIP de LÁSZLÓ MASTER OF ELEGANCE

Foreword

Dr Steven Parissien

The story of Philip de László is as colourful and remarkable as his pictures. Born to a humble family in Budapest in 1869, his rich and revealing portraits were soon winning accolades and awards across Europe. He married Lucy Guinness of the distinguished banking branch of the brewing family, moved to London, was knighted by King Edward VII and ennobled by Emperor Franz Josef (in his role as King of Hungary), and in 1914 became a British citizen – although that did not prevent him from being interned for a year during the First World War.

By the time of his death in 1937, de László was recognised as one of the world's foremost portrait painters, an artist who was able to depict any sitter, from society beauties to monarchs, scientists to soldiers, with brilliance and verve, and who could bestow a touch of glamour and elegance on even the most modest of subjects. His works reflected an age in which the unequivocal display of success, luxury and fortune was able to be less ambiguously expressed than it is today, while his art represented the climax of a tradition of outstanding portraiture stretching back to Sargent, Lawrence, Gainsborough and Van Dyck.

In the years of European austerity which followed the Second World War, de László's reputation as an artist inevitably declined, particularly in Communist Hungary. Today, however, he once more takes his rightful place as one of the modern era's most talented and luminous portrait painters.

Thanks to the tireless work of the de Laszlo Archive Trust, this wonderful exhibition and accompanying catalogue amply demonstrate not just the wide range of subjects which de László chose but also the dazzling virtuosity that he was able to deploy throughout his career. Katherine Field's engaging, revealing and painstakingly-researched book examines how de László rose from humble beginnings to become society's leading portraitist, a man whose sophisticated, elegant and seemingly effortless bravura earned him global fame.

Gainsborough's House Museum is delighted to have been able to host this outstanding display of de László's works, the first to focus on the artist's British oeuvre. The idea for this exhibition originated with former Gainsborough's House director Mark Bills and Katherine Field, Senior Editor at the de Laszlo Archive Trust, both of whom we thank profusely. We additionally thank Katherine for cheerfully taking on both the curation of the exhibition and the authorship and editing of this superb catalogue, and Sandra de Laszlo for her help, insight and encouragement, as well as for the de Laszlo Archive Trust's specific support for the production of this book and a copious supply of Royal Tokaji wines.

We are, of course, also hugely grateful for the generosity of our gracious lenders: His Majesty the King, the Royal Collection Trust and the many private lenders who have helped to make this such a fascinating exhibition.

Thanks, too, to Neville Rolt and his splendid team at Blackmore Publishing, to Steve Hayes for his book design and to Ian Drake for designing the exhibition. And many thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Timothy and Mary Clode, and all of our other wonderful museum donors, without whom we would not have been able to stage this exhibition nor to produce this book.

Lastly, special thanks to our Keeper of Art, Emma Boyd, to our curatorial team of Pat Hardy and Mahaut de la Motte, and indeed to all the staff at Gainsborough's House, without whose enthusiasm and dedication none of this would be possible.

DR STEVEN PARISSIEN

Director, Gainsborough's House Museum
Sudbury, January 2024

CHRONOLOGY / TIMELINE FOR GAINSBOROUGH'S HOUSE



1869

Fülöp Laub born on 30 April in Pest, Hungary, third of five surviving children of Adolf, a tailor, and his wife Johanna, a seamstress.



1878

Leaves school at the age of 9 to pursue several artistic apprenticeships.



1884

Starts work with society photographer Sándor Strelisky.



1886

Accepted as a part-time student at the National Drawing School in Budapest where he studies with history painter Professor Bertalan Székely and then Károly Lotz.



1890

Studies for five months at the Royal Bavarian Academy, Munich, and then the Académie Julian, Paris, for six months as a pupil of Professor Jules Lefebvre.



1891
The artist and his brother Marczell Hungarianize their surname from Laub to László.



1892
Studies at the Royal Bavarian Academy. Meets Lucy Guinness at a ball given by the Academy Students' Austro-Hungarian Society in Munich. She poses for his picture *The Hofbräuhaus* which wins the Silver Medal at the Royal Bavarian Academy's exhibition.



1893
Meets Elek Lippich de Korongh, Secretary of the Fine Arts Department of the Hungarian Ministry of Education, who becomes his mentor. Through Lippich he makes many contacts and secures important early commissions.



1894
First royal commission, travelling to Bulgaria to paint Prince Ferdinand, his wife Princess Marie Louise and their son Prince Boris. Starts learning English.



1897
Commissions architect László Gyalus to design a studio-house at 10 Pálma utca near the City Park in Budapest.



1898
Joseph Minot of Boston, having seen de László's work at the Paris Salon, invites him to the Isle of Wight to paint his family at Berwick Lodge in Ryde.



1899
Paints Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary.



1900
Paints Pope Leo XIII in Rome and the portrait wins the Gold Medal at the Paris Salon. On 7 June he marries Lucy Guinness at St Brigid's in Stillorgan, County Dublin. They honeymoon later in Switzerland at the invitation of Sir Ernest Cassel, banker and friend of Edward VII.



1903
 Moves to Vienna to further his career.



1907
 First one-man exhibition at The Fine Art Society in London. King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra attend and commission portraits. This success prompts a move from Vienna to London where the artist rents 19 Hanover Terrace in Regent's Park before moving to 3 Palace Gate in Kensington.



1908
 Paints President and Mrs Theodore Roosevelt at the White House, Washington, D.C., the first of five visits to the United States. He paints four Presidents during his career; Theodore Roosevelt (1908), Warren Harding (1921), Calvin Coolidge (1926) and Herbert Hoover (1931).



Philip Alexius László
 1911 [9724]

1910
 Travels to Madrid to paint King Alfonso XIII and Queen Eugenia of Spain, granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Receives an invitation by the Italian government to paint a self-portrait for the Vasari Corridor at the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.



1911
 Portrait of Lady Wantage is his first picture accepted by the Royal Academy for its Summer Exhibition.



1912
 Ennobled by the Emperor of Austria with the hereditary family name and prefix de Lombos. Styles himself Philip Alexius de László. He designs his coat of arms himself and adopts the motto *Veritas Vincit* (Truth Prevails).



1914
 Travels to Athens to paint King Constantine and other members of the Greek Royal Family. Submits application for British nationality in June and this is granted in August just after the outbreak of the First World War.



1917
 Arrested and imprisoned under the *Defence of the Realm Act* for continuing to send letters and money to his Hungarian family.



1919
 De László's case heard by the *Naturalisation Revocation Committee* in June. Exonerated he is free to continue his life and career.



1920
 Moves to 3 Fitzjohn's Avenue in North London, his home for the rest of his life. Builds a studio in the garden.



1921
 Publication of Oakley Williams's *Selections from The Work of P.A. de László*, with a foreword by Count Robert de Montesquiou.



1924
 Invited to exhibit in Budapest for first time since the war and shows *Two Sikh Cavalry Officers* at the National Salon (Nemzeti Szalon).



1925
 Invited to a Buckingham Palace garden party for the first time since his release from internment. This signifies his successful return to prominence in English society. Lucy was presented at Court the next year.



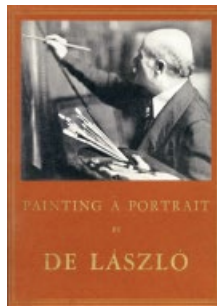
1926
 Paints George Eastman of Eastman Kodak who presents him with one of the first hand-held motion picture cameras. The artist and his sons film a unique record of his life: working in his studio, with his sitters in the garden and on his travels.



1929
 Travels to Egypt to paint King Fuad. His pictures are included in twenty-two exhibitions across Europe.



1931
 One-man exhibition at Hôtel Charpentier, Paris, his largest show to date with one hundred and two paintings, including landscapes.



1934
 The book *Painting a Portrait by de László* documents his painting technique in text and photographs



1937
 Suffers a heart attack on 20 October and dies on 22 November. Awarded the Hungarian Badge of the Corvinus Order of Honour. Exhibition of his paintings opens on 24 November at Wildenstein and Co. Ltd., Bond Street, London. His son Paul shows Queen Mary around the gallery. The Archbishop of Canterbury presides over de László's funeral at St Margaret's, Westminster. He is buried in All Saint's Churchyard, Tilford, Surrey. His epitaph reads: "Life is so glorious."

PHILIP de LÁSZLÓ IN ENGLAND Triumph, Tribulation and Restoration

Katherine Field



De László in Hungarian nobleman's dress wearing his MVO at home in 3 Palace Gate, London

I adopted England for love & devotion of her great democratic spirit, her tradition of art.¹

Philip de László was one of the most famous portrait painters in Europe when he decided to settle in London in 1907. His relentless energy, charisma and pursuit of artistic perfection saw his circle of patronage widen from Budapest, the city of his birth, through the princely houses of Europe and westward to Vienna, where he lived from 1903. Before arriving in London, he had already received commissions from the royal houses of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria.

His determined rise had seen him go from penniless student scavenging exhibition tickets outside the Paris Salon to finding himself a welcome guest at royal palaces and castles throughout Europe. De László expected the same reception in England when he moved there with his Irish-born wife Lucy Guinness, however, he encountered jealousy and prejudice alongside his considerable success. This, in time, led to his internment as a suspected “enemy alien” during the First World War when his freedom and career hung in the balance. His reasons for the move to England were later underscored in the statement he prepared for the Naturalisation Revocation Committee while fighting to keep his British citizenship in 1919. It provides an idealistic description of his adopted country in his own words:

...my mind has always been greatly attracted to England because of the particular branch of art to which I have been specially devoted, namely, that of portrait painting. England possesses, as no other country does, a wonderful tradition of portrait painting which comes to us, in a continued succession, to this day from the time of Henry VIII., when it was commenced by Holbein, continued by Zuccherò, Vandyke, Sir Peter Lely, Kneller, Angelica Kauffman, and the unrivalled School comprising Reynolds, Raeburn, Gainsborough, Romney, and by a long chain of distinguished artists down to our time.

I knew, too, the traditional welcome given by England to foreign artists. I have already alluded to the welcome given to Holbein, Vandyke, Lely and Kneller. I might further allude to a host of others, and, even in our day, to Angeli, Edgar Boehm (my countryman), Alma Tadema, Herkomer and Sargent, who have all been received with a noble absence of prejudice, not only by the public, but also by their brother artists who have received them with unstinted cordiality. England has had her legitimate reward for this long continued magnanimity, in the possession of a treasury of art which is the envy of the world. All this led me to feel that here indeed I could make my life, in this home of the art to which I was devoted, and that I perhaps might aspire to become a link, however humble, in the great chain of foreign artists who had been received and treated by England as her own sons.²

De László first travelled to England in summer 1898 and visited the National Gallery in London, to expand his visual knowledge of the British school of portrait painters. On a second trip in June 1899 he acquainted himself with important Royal Academicians and visited the art school of Sir Hubert von Herkomer at Bushey. He wrote to his mentor Elek Lippich that he was also planning to visit Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema in his studio in the artists' enclave of Grove End Road, St John's Wood.³

On 20 October 1899 he received a letter from Dowager German Empress Friedrich's secretary Götz von Seckendorff who was staying at Balmoral: “I beg to inform you that Her Majesty the Queen of England has expressed the wish to see some of your paintings. I advise you to comply with this wish, as it may be to your advantage and may also open the doors to many private collections in this country which would otherwise be difficult for you to see.”⁴

He arranged to send his portraits of Prince Max von Ratibor and his daughter Victoria which the Dowager Empress had recently seen in Frankfurt. Seckendorff replied: "I received your letter of the 25th and will not fail to guard your interests, but I am not yet in the position to-day to make any definite promises. You must realize that there will be professional jealousy here just as everywhere else. Should we succeed in getting an order, keep your prices low in the beginning."⁵ The Queen admired the portraits and in 1900 commissioned one of General Sir George White, popular hero of the recently ended siege of Ladysmith during the Second Boer War.⁶

Relationship with the Art World in England

In May 1907, de László announced his arrival in England with an exhibition at the Fine Art Society of fifty-six portraits of his most glamorous and influential sitters from the previous ten years. These included the King of Portugal, the Grand Duke of Hesse, Princess Louise of Battenberg and the Marchioness of Cambridge. The artist's permanent move was well timed as it coincided with John Singer Sargent's retirement from painting portraits in oils and de László was his natural successor. According to Richard Ormond:

Portraits by Sargent and de László are marked by flowing brushwork and scintillating effects of light and colour that bring their subjects vividly to life. At the same time their sitters are invested with the aura of wealth and glamour, power and prestige, through the devices of grand design and pictorial invention.⁷



Portrait of General Sir George White commissioned by Queen Victoria in 1900

The presence of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra at the opening and their commission for a portrait of their daughter Princess Victoria guaranteed success and a flood of new orders. There were still promised portraits to complete in Europe and de László travelled to Germany soon after, leaving his wife, Lucy, to find them a home and studio in London. As a result, Charles Holme, editor of *The Studio* magazine, introduced her to Sir Alfred East, who gave the artist use of his studio just off Victoria Street in Westminster in August 1907 until he found a suitable one of his own at West House on Campden Hill, rented to him by the widow of George Boughton. This address situated him in the heart of London's artistic community and the grand studio-houses that Victorian greats like Frederic, Lord Leighton and Sir John Everett Millais had built for themselves.

In gratitude for his kind reception, de László painted East in a pose reminiscent of Sargent's portrait of Carolus-Duran with whom both East and Sargent had studied in Paris. East served as President of the Royal Society of British Artists in 1908 and encouraged de László to exhibit there, which he did twice a year until the First World War. His portrait of East was included in their 1909 Winter exhibition.

De László also made a point of introducing himself to John Lavery who responded: "Permit me to congratulate you on your London success."⁸ They had first met in 1905 when Lavery was part of the judging committee at the Venice Biennale. From 1899 Lavery lived and worked at 5 Cromwell Place, South Kensington, very near the artist's home at 3 Palace Gate.



Exhibition of the Royal Society of British Artists, London, 1930

Sir Alfred East, inscribed: *In great admiration /*
to Alfred East / P.A. László / 1907 / London



Relationship with the Royal Academy

Despite the initial welcome from individual members of the Royal Academy, de László's relationship with the wider institution was strained from the beginning. In 1904 he travelled from his home in Vienna to Penrhôs near Holyhead to paint Lord Stanley of Alderley; a valuable commission as he met Lord Londonderry there who was to become one of his most important patrons. Encouraged by Lady Stanley, de László submitted the portrait to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition but it was rejected. Lady Stanley, who was understandably put out, commented: "I think there must be something wrong with the Hanging Committee this year. I look upon their conduct as quite unjustifiable."⁹

It was not until 1911 that de László's portrait of Lady Wantage was accepted for exhibition by the Academy even though he had been living by then in England for four years. The painting was hung on the line but in a corner, which enraged the artist who saw this as an insult to one who had conquered the rest of Europe and won prizes at many major exhibitions. Lady Wantage, a collector of J.M.W. Turner, whose work can be seen in the background of the portrait, echoed the artist's sentiments: "I am vexed at the picture not having the first-rate place it ought to be entitled to. It makes me almost regret that you finally decided, notwithstanding my letter to you, to send it to the R. Academy. But it is such a fine thing that it will hold its own, even in its corner."¹⁰

In 1915 the Royal Academy rejected the artist's full-length portrait of Lord Devonport [Cat. 19] citing his Hungarian birth. The rejection prompted the sitter to write:

You were right in your conception of the meanness to which jealous rivals will descend. I confess that I had a broader view of my countrymen. But they have belied me. To describe such a mean and petty excuse for the exclusion of your work as scandalous is to put it in mild terms. They know as well as I do that you are a British subject, and that as such you are entitled to equal terms and equal treatment with the best of them. We all know that success breeds 'envy, hatred and malice' among those who grudge it because they cannot command or gain it for themselves. It is their only refuge!

They should be compelled to answer the conundrum of their own making – When is an Englishman not an Englishman? Their answer (from their conscience) would probably be, 'When he paints too well.'¹¹

The outbreak of war caused the art market to stagnate and the possibility of bankruptcy for artists became very real. British artists mobilised themselves, led by Lavery's public appeal that artists should paint two portraits of those serving in the war for a fee of £50 to be donated to the Artists' General Benevolent Institution.¹² De László supported the scheme so enthusiastically that his wife wrote: "Of course they all want de László's brush for their husbands. You really should wear khaki as being the first portraitist to the Expeditionary Force! How much fame and love and gratitude you reap on all sides, the Benevolent Society not the least. I am so thankful and proud that you can help your fellow artists and the nation so much with your clever hands!"¹³ On three occasions he joined fellow artists Augustus John, William Orpen and Lavery in donating a blank canvas to Christie's auctions, organised by Lord Joicey, in aid of the British Red Cross. This gave purchasers the opportunity to have their own or a designated sitter's portrait painted. Apart from the £10,000 offered by Hugh Lane to tempt Sargent out of retirement, de László's canvases raised £1000 each, more than those of any other British artist.¹⁴ Lucy later alluded to the jealousy that arose in some quarters, prompting her husband to ask that his next canvas be sold privately rather than at auction. Lord Joicey complied and sold it privately for £1000.¹⁵



Lady Wantage, the artist's first portrait accepted for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1911



Untraced portrait of Lady George Wellesley,
née Louise Nesta Pamela Fitzgerald, 1913

As the war dragged on, antipathy to former nationals of enemy nations grew. De László was struck off by all his clubs, apart from the Burlington Arts Club. Even Hankley Common Golf Club cancelled his membership in 1918. The “International Society” purged those of its members considered too foreign including de László. Ironically, the society had been founded by James McNeill Whistler to form bonds between Europe and America and de László had been invited to exhibit with them in 1906 by Auguste Rodin, the then serving president. In 1916 the artist was asked to resign his Honorary Membership of the Royal Society of British Artists after George Frampton demanded the revision of the list of honorary members owing to “the continued presence in the Society of several natives of enemy countries.” The Society replied that the artists he objected to were naturalised British Subjects, bringing a stinging retort:

Your attitude, to my mind, suggests great weakness and a lamentable want of patriotism, and it is quite impossible for me, as a patriotic Englishman, to be associated with a Society that places its interests before the honour and safety of its Country.¹⁶

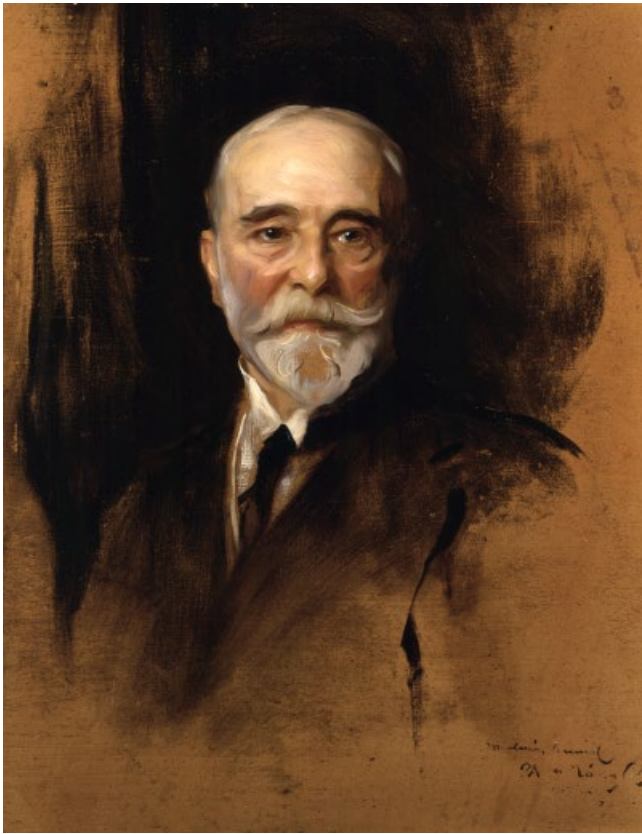
Xenophobic sentiments in the country and even in the art establishment were running extremely high, and de László’s final submission to be accepted for the Royal Academy was his elegant portrait of Lady Richard Wellesley shown at the Summer Exhibition of 1914.¹⁷ The portrait itself remains untraced, but surviving photographs show that it was a fine example of the artist’s great skill in making portraits in the Grand Manner. Despite the Royal Academy’s antipathy, in 1916 Sir Arthur Cope exhibited his own portrait of de László, presently untraced. Cope was to become de László’s nemesis in his struggle with the Establishment.

Jealousy

The outbreak of war in 1914 and subsequent implementation of the *Defence of the Realm Act* also witnessed a rise in allegations against artists for spying while simply painting *en plein air*. Among those arrested and interrogated were Lavery, Philip Wilson Steer, Augustus John and Laura Knight. As a result, a petition was made to the government: “The regulation is so worded as to exclude the right of any artists whatever to paint anywhere except inside their studio and houses ... artists are faced with the prospect of ruin and bankruptcy if the war is of long duration.”¹⁸

At a time when many artists were facing ruin, de László’s prices might also have contributed to feelings of jealousy. Though perceived as an outsider in some circles, he was achieving substantial prices when compared to most of his peers. Between 1909 and 1914 Orpen earned between £4000–9000 per annum.¹⁹ Lucy recorded in her 1914 diary that her husband earned £4,400 in just four weeks in Paris that spring, the equivalent of approximately £418,000 today.²⁰ His prices rose steadily after the war and by 1928 a conservative estimate puts his income at £89,000 in 1928 (£4,600,000 in 2024), against Orpen’s £54,729 in 1929 (£2,833,000).²¹

Nevertheless, many members of the art establishment remained supportive of de László during the First World War. Sir Luke Fildes was one Royal Academician who refused to associate himself with other colleagues’ attitudes. He first met de László at Bad Kissingen in 1909 and they remained friends, painting portraits of each other in 1914. On 28 September 1917, following the artist’s arrest on 17 September, Fildes testified on his behalf before the Advisory Committee. In gratitude de László inscribed the 1914 portrait after his release from his internment in 1919: *Souvenir Amical / P.A de László / 1919 IX 28*.



Sir Samuel Luke Fildes, 1914

Fildes was not alone as at least thirty other artists and writers, led by Alfred Lys Baldry and Jerome K. Jerome, rallied to support de László during the war. Lucy recorded Jerome's visit in her diary on 14 March 1918 while the artist was still interned:

Jerome K Jerome lunched here today...v. sympathetic & told me he had suggested to P. that some of his colleagues & some literary men, might appeal to the Home Sec. on P's behalf – that the internment was telling on him so much & in the interests of Art, to ask for his release ... He said he thinks Laszlo was interned to show that the Government are on the look out for spies. He is going to write to Fildes, Lavery & Salamon [sic] about the appeal.²²

Lavery's most important act of friendship was testifying on the artist's behalf at the Naturalisation Revocation Committee hearing in June 1919 where he referred to de László as "a man of the utmost honour, and as evidence of his friendliness to this country mentioned the large sums he had contributed to the British Red Cross and other charitable funds."²³ Correspondence in the artist's archive shows they remained friends for the rest of their lives.

The pain over his treatment during the war and beyond remained with de László long after his exoneration and release. As late as 1935, de László's wife met with the Lord Chancellor Justice Sankey



Lucy de László and Fildes at Bad Kissengen in 1909

to enquire about an ennoblement from the British Royal Family to help dispel any lingering prejudice against the artist as a result of his internment:

But matters did not end with the findings of the Court. This cruel prejudice is kept up against my husband, notably by Sir Arthur Cope and Admiral Hall. My husband has never been invited to the Academy dinner, we are not even sent an invitation to the opening of the Academy...The Prince of Wales [was] at a public dinner of the Artist[s'] Benevolent Institution, where Cope was present and my husband [,] who was then president of the R.B.A. When the Prince got up to leave, he shook hands with everyone, but skipped my husband!²⁴

De László gained a large measure of redress through his success in re-establishing his reputation after his release. His 1923 exhibition at the French Gallery drew huge crowds and achieved £254 in admissions, the equivalent of some £13,000 today, which was donated to the Artists' General Benevolent Institution. De László's satisfaction was evident as he wrote to the Gallery: "It gives me great satisfaction to know that we have achieved the sum.... I have written today to Sir Arthur S. Cope, R.A. The Hon. Secretary to the Artists' General Benevolent Institution informing him that you will be forwarding a cheque for this amount in my name."²⁵

In 1935 de László caricatured Cope contemptuously at a dinner for the Artists' General Benevolent Institution which he inscribed "Cope The R.A. & miserable." De László was guest of honour that evening in recognition of the thousands of pounds he had raised over the years by donating fees from his exhibitions at Agnew's and the French Gallery. He recorded the evening in his diary:

...well placed as a guest of Honour on the High table – saw their [sic] the low spirited fellow – Sir Arthur Cope R.A. & his friend Admiral Hall. This two man [sic] are responsible for my terrible sufferings during the War & today cannot get over them – they arranged their seat not to face me – I hope justice will reach them.²⁶

Rejection by the Royal Academy proved less damaging than it might have been for a less talented and established artist. De László's career thrived through solo exhibitions with London art dealers Agnew's, the French Gallery, Knoedler's, Dowdeswell and many more throughout Europe and America.

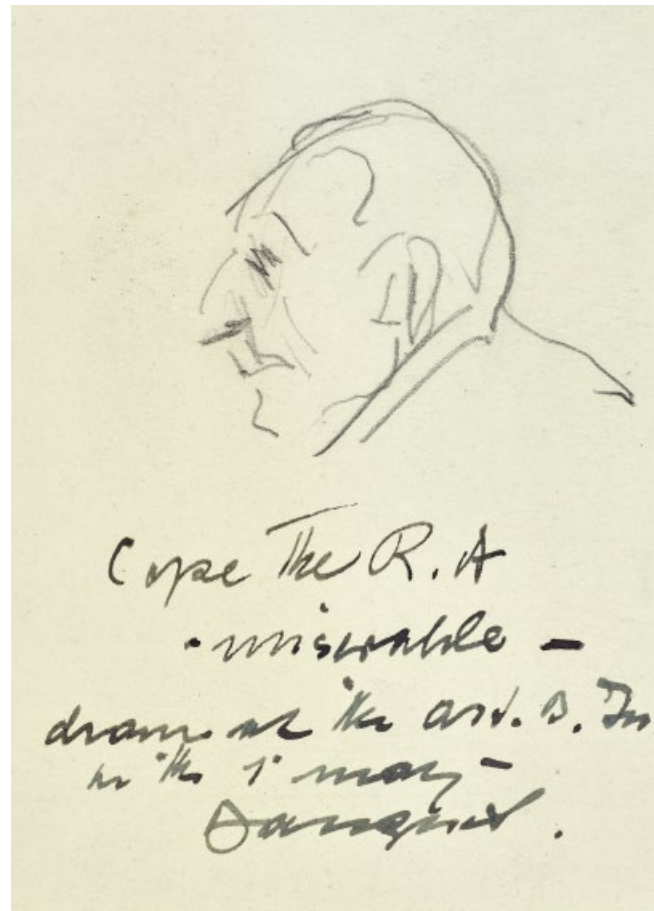
Modernism

De László's differences with Cope's coterie of Royal Academicians were mutually short sighted since both faced a larger threat to their artistic survival in the form of the rising tide of Modernism. Indeed, de László's career coexisted uncomfortably with the revolution taking place in 20th-century art embodied by movements including Cubism, Vorticism and Surrealism which sought to sweep away existing artistic tradition. Intellectuals and art critics such as Herbert Read and Roger Fry fiercely promoted these Modernist developments, investing the artistic status quo with a new kind of elitism.²⁷

From his earliest years in London, de László had actively promoted traditional artistic education and painting methods, taking time out of his relentless painting schedule to teach the advanced portrait class at the London and New Art School in Stratford Road, Kensington, for students intending to become professional painters. As proof of his deep social conscience, and perhaps because of his own humble origins, he refused to charge for tuition and privately helped those in financial need.²⁸

De László's charitable nature and desire to educate also extended to helping the working classes attend some of his exhibitions without charge. A touching letter no longer in his archive but recorded in Rutter's *Portrait of a Painter* reads:

I hope you won't think me too presumptuous in writing these few lines to thank you for making it possible for me to see your wonderful work. I am only a mill girl, but I love art in any shape or form, and I must say yours has surpassed anything I have ever seen. Your wonderful generosity in giving this exhibition free of charge is in keeping with your wonderful life-like pictures. Only a



De László's caricature of Sir Arthur Cope made at a dinner for the Artists' General Benevolent Institution which he inscribed: *Cope The R.A. & miserable.*

beautiful soul could make both possible, many may have seen your paintings, but none with more delight and reverence than yours. Respectfully, Betty Gilruth.²⁹

In 1930, he was elected President of the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA), an honour of which he was exceedingly proud, and hoped to use his position to promote art founded on hard won technical expertise and close observation of nature. He sought out Royal Academicians who held compatible beliefs, including Lavery, Sir George Clausen and Sir Herbert Hughes-Stanton as jurors for the RBA's annual prizes.³⁰

As President he also encountered Reginald Wilenski, an English painter, art historian and critic known for his books *The Modern Movement in Art* (1927) and *The Meaning of Modern Sculpture* (1932). Owing to his office, de László felt compelled to welcome Wilenski when the latter was invited to give a lecture to their members by Hesketh Hubbard, founder of a life drawing school under the umbrella of the RBA.³¹

I said to Wilensky – Velasquez & Goya whose works I recently saw in Madrid were not made by the art critic! Happy people & real artists – W's lecture was an outrage and any normality of moral and aesthetic – most uninteresting in delivery – selfish – arrogant [he said] Rembrandt & Epstein are on the same level. This morbid [indistinct] of a man writes in various daily important papers – what immorality of the press or crime on the young generation – who just now in this chaotic days [sic] needs leaders of Higher moral than Wilensky!³²

Modernism was not, of course, restricted to the visual arts. The author Ivor Brown, well known for his humorous polemics on modern poetry, wrote to his fellow Garrick Club member Sir Alfred Munnings:

It seems to me – as regards Art critics and English painting – that we may rave all we like about the Old Masters up to Gainsborough and Lawrence, or to Rowlandson ... After that even Victorians like Frith, Millais and the rest were all wrong. To-day, it seems to me, it's a crime if any of us dare look at a representational piece of modern painting. As for the poor devils that do it – God help them!³³

De László's protestations preceded Sir Alfred Munnings' notorious 1949 speech in defence of artistic tradition at his final dinner as President of the Royal Academy, the two artists being unified in their view that artists like Picasso were debasing art. The art critic Alfred Lys Baldry and de László joined forces to make their opinions on modernism known to a wider audience. On 20 May 1936 de László gave a lecture to the Royal Society entitled *The Art of our Day*. The printed lecture with Baldry's annotations and the original illustrative glass slides survive in the artist's archive. It is a robust artistic statement in defence of truth to nature and the lifelong development of technical skill:



Comparative slide used in the artist's lecture at the Royal Society. An Amazon fragment from the west pediment of the Temple of Asklepios at Epidauros. On the right a Modernist sculpture of a human figure by an unknown artist

One of the absurdities of modern criticism is the argument, which you will find put forth even in the most prominent newspapers, that the representation of nature is not art and that a man is only to be counted as an artist when he evolves something from his inner consciousness, without reference to, or dependence upon, nature! The less evidence of nature study there is in a piece of work, and the greater reliance it shows upon a morbid or ridiculous convention, the more definitely artistic is it pronounced to be. In other words, art has to turn its back on nature; and the crazy fancies of men of possibly small intelligence are to be substituted for the inspired interpretation of natural truths which is given us by the observant artist who can show clearly how he responds to the impressions which nature makes upon him.³⁴

In thirty-one slides he expounded on those Old Master paintings which he upheld as expressions of his artistic theory and stressed the need for technical expertise and continuous improvement. The works are still considered masterpieces today and include many works in English public collections, affording his audience the opportunity of visiting them in person.³⁵ They include William Hogarth's *The Shrimp Girl* and Thomas Gainsborough's *The Morning Walk* at the National Gallery, Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Nelly O'Brien* at the Wallace Collection and Rembrandt's *Self-portrait with Two Circles* at Kenwood House. During the lecture de László also paid tribute to artists of his own generation: Jules Bastien-Lepage, Orpen, Sargent and Whistler.

Alongside the more traditional works, the artist placed Modernist examples for purposes of comparison and to highlight defects of technical skill and understanding, stating: "The degradation of art has been reserved for our time...We are dominated by a craving for sensation, and our whole outlook on life is ugly and distorted." He went on to quote from an article by the art critic Frank Rutter: "We can all agree that the best intentions will not redeem a picture that is pitifully poor in technical merit."³⁶

The lecture was well received, and the Royal Society presented de László with its Silver Medal. The sculptor William Charles Holland King attended and took time to write to the artist congratulating him. He and de László had known each other for some time and King exhibited a portrait bust of the artist at the Royal Academy in 1917:

It is from such outspoken truths that a recovery will eventually come. Nothing could have been more enlightening than the slides you showed us, & the inevitable comparisons. I made an effort to thank you, in person, but you were too much in demand. I felt the force of your words all the more as amongst my pupils I have one or two painters, wisely doing some modelling, whose views are tainted with the too prevalent curse, ill described, as modern.³⁷



Bust of Philip de László by W.C.H. King, 1917

No one attending that evening could have foreseen that in just eighteen months de László, still full of enthusiasm for his work and zest for life, would be dead. Colonel Frederick Balfour wrote an obituary in *The Times* that encapsulates a life filled with extraordinary achievement, both professionally and personally. It merits quotation in full:

To those who have enjoyed the intimacy of Philip László his passing is a sore break. No one had more generous appreciation of his friends; indeed, for many there are delightful examples of this generosity in the portraits of themselves or their children hanging upon their walls. We can remember the blank canvases he gave for the Red Cross sales at Christie's.

To few is it given to receive in their life-time the acknowledgment of genius by people of all countries alike. He was one of those who were requested to paint their self-portraits for the Pitti – a distinction shared by few artists. The somewhat grudging recognition and trite criticism by British contemporary artists may or may not reflect the judgment of their successors, but that his pictures give us vivid presentations of the men and women of many nations who have made the history of the last 30 years is indisputable.

The mark of the magician was surely that he painted with a speed and a certainty portraits that give intense pleasure to those who possess them, reflecting as they do the true inmost character of the sitters. His treatment at the time of the War spy mania it makes us blush to remember. It was always a delight to hear him speak of the friends who stood by him at that unhappy time; of them, two of his own craft, Sargent and Lavery, were among the foremost. Of the romance of his marriage and of the beauty of his home life we must not speak. His simplicity of character and the warmth of his friendship will never be forgotten by those who loved him.³⁸

The last major exhibition of the artist's work, *A Brush with Grandeur* held at Christie's in 2004, provided a significant reappraisal of his work. Since then, there have been *de László in Holland* at the Museum Van Loon in 2006, a monographic display at the National Portrait Gallery in 2010 and a major exhibition at the Hungarian National Gallery in 2019. Recent significant advances in the digitisation of his letter, photographic and film archive and ongoing work on his catalogue raisonné continue to add greatly to our knowledge of de László's remarkable life and career.

- 1 Lucy de László, 1917 diary, 'Notes for 1918.'
- 2 DLA128-0015, *Statement of Philip Alexius László de Lombos in the Matter of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914, 1919.*
- 3 Letter from de László to Elek Lippich, 27 June 1899, Lippich Bequest, Manuscripts Archive of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest.
- 4 Rutter 1939, p. 165.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 166.
- 6 The artist was forced to return from his honeymoon to achieve the commission.
- 7 Richard Ormond, 'De László and Sargent', in de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley, 2004, p. 41. Sargent later expressed admiration for de László's portrait of Lord Lee of Fareham as his wife noted in her 1923 diary: "Incidentally, he admired A[rthur]'s portrait by László, and is big and generous enough to say so – unlike most of his inferior and jealous colleagues at the Royal Academy."
- 8 DLA009-0021, letter from John Lavery to de László, undated but following de László's Fine Art Society exhibition, which opened in May 1907.
- 9 Rutter 1939, p. 225.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 267.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 303.
- 12 Founded in 1814 by members of the Royal Academy of Arts including J.M.W. Turner, John Constable and John Soane. Incorporated by Royal Charter in 1842, it is one of the oldest charities in the United Kingdom and is based at Burlington House.
- 13 Rutter 1939, p. 298.
- 14 Fox 2015, p. 64.
- 15 Lucy de László, 1935 diary, 10 April entry. That the artist's wife was referring to these events some twenty years later gives some indication of the stress endured by them both.
- 16 Letter from George Frampton to the Royal Society of British Artists, 6 February 1915, quoted in Fox 2015, p. 57. De László was similarly treated in Hungary and Austria, where his bank accounts were seized, and he was branded a traitor in the press for taking British citizenship.
- 17 Resentment lingered and de László never exhibited there again. In 2010 his portrait of Pope Leo XIII was included in the exhibition *Treasures from Budapest: European Masterpieces from Leonardo to Schiele*, the only work by the artist to hang on the Royal Academy's walls since 1914.
- 18 'St Ives Petition', 3 September 1915, Imperial Arts League Papers, LMA/4054/A/06/001, London Metropolitan Archives.
- 19 Robert Upstone, *William Orpen: Politics, Sex and Death*, exh. cat., Imperial War Museum, London, 2005, p. 28.
- 20 Bank of England, Historic Inflation Calculator online.
- 21 De László's prices in 1928 for head & shoulders £1,000 (£51,780), three-quarter £2,000 (£103,560), full-length £3,000 (£155,341). These varied according to sitter and location and he charged substantially more for portraits painted in America.
- 22 Lucy de László, 1918 diary, 14 March entry. "Salamon" refers to Solomon J. Solomon R.A. (1860–1927).
- 23 *Dundee Courier*, 28 June 1919, p. 5.
- 24 Lucy de László, 1935 diary, 10 April entry. Admiral Sir William Reginald Hall (1870–1943) was the British Director of Naval Intelligence from 1914 to 1919. Lucy and the artist met the Prince of Wales at the Spanish court in 1927. Queen Ena brought him and his brother, Prince George Duke of Kent, to his studio in the palace to see the portraits of the royal family.
- 25 DLA106-0042, letter from de László to the French Gallery, 3 July 1923.
- 26 Philip de László, January–June 1935 diary, 1 May entry.
- 27 Herbert Read, *The Philosophy of Modern Art*, London, 1952.
- 28 Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 129.
- 29 Rutter 1939, p. 391.
- 30 Philip de László, 1931 diary, 13 April entry.
- 31 Founded in 1930, now known as the Hesketh Hubbard Art Society.
- 32 Philip de László, 1931 diary, 13 April entry.
- 33 Quoted in Sir Alfred Munnings, *The Finish*, London, 1952, p. 91.
- 34 DLA104-0002, Royal Society lecture *The Art of Our Day* with handwritten annotations by Alfred Lys Baldry, 1936.
- 35 The complete list is: William Hogarth, *The Shrimp Girl*, c. 1740, National Gallery, London; Diego Velázquez, *Pope Innocent X*, c. 1650, Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome; Thomas Gainsborough, *The Morning Walk*, 1785, National Gallery, London; Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Nelly O'Brien*, c.1762–1764, Wallace Collection, London; Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-portrait with Two Circles*, c. 1659, Kenwood House, Iveagh Bequest, London; Hans Holbein the Younger, *Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk*, c. 1539, Royal Collection Trust; Titian, *Philip II of Spain in Armour*, 1550–1551, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid; J.M.W. Turner, *A First-rate Taking in Stores*, 1819, The Higgins Bedford; Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Portrait of Monsieur Bertin*, 1832, Musée du Louvre, Paris; Francisco Goya, *Charles IV of Spain and His Family*, 1800, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid; Henry Raeburn, *The McNab*, 1803–1813, John Dewar & Sons; Frans Hals, *Marriage Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen*, c. 1622, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
- 36 DLA104-0004, Royal Society lecture *The Art of Our Day* with handwritten annotations by Alfred Lys Baldry, 1936.
- 37 DLA104-0052, letter from William Charles Holland King to de László, 21 May 1936.
- 38 Colonel Frederick Balfour, 'Mr. de László', *The Times*, 25 November 1937, p. 19.

DAZZLING BEAUTIES

Philip de László's Sitters and their Jewellery

Geoffrey Munn

Jewellery has been described as the highest form of dress and in Philip de László's portraits rank and status are signalled by both. For men it is uniforms, helmets, orders and medals that say it all but for women *haute couture*, furs and valuable jewellery reflect their noble, if not their royal station.

One of de László's most lavish depictions of gemstones figures in his portrait of Queen Marie of Romania (1875–1938), finished in 1924 [Cat. 6]. The sitter was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria on one side and the Russian Emperor Alexander II on the other, but she was also Queen consort of King Ferdinand I of Romania (1865–1927). At the centre of the composition is an impressive sapphire and diamond tiara made by Cartier in 1909.¹ It was set centrally with a cushion-cut sapphire that weighed 137.2 carats and the six matching cabochon stones flanking it weighed another 102.3 carats. Queen Marie wore the diadem at her coronation celebrations in 1922 and in 1935 she lent it to the Exhibition of Russian Art, held in aid of the Red Cross at 1 Belgrave Square. The press reported that it was insured for £20,000 and was guarded day and night by security personnel and a dog of "useful proportions and instincts."

In Marie's portrait the tiara is apparently secured by a chin strap of pearls but this was nothing practical, rather it was a theatrical stratagem arranged by de László. The Queen remembered his skill in posing her for the sitting:

So he asked me to put on my Russian sapphire and diamond diadem, he draped me in gold, with a sort of golden veil on my head, a marvellous harmony of gold in gold with only eyes and the sapphires a blue touch in the whole.²

This portrait conjures a seemingly Byzantine splendour, but the true majesty of the image was increased by Marie's famous sautoir with a pendant sapphire weighing 478 carats. It too was made by Cartier and was purchased for her by King Ferdinand in 1921 for 1,375,000 francs.³

Clearly de László's interest in jewellery was as much personal as professional. He occasionally noted historic provenances in his day book; most notably the Marchioness of Carisbrooke's use of Queen Victoria's tiara at her sitting in 1934.⁴ Rendering the return of light from precious stones is one of the greatest challenges to the portrait painter and de László met it effortlessly with the dominant sapphire in Queen Marie's tiara, not with a dab of extra blue, but with a flash of white, perfectly suggesting the light refracted from its central facet.

Happily a photographic record of de László's experiments with similar effects survives. The subject was the magnificent parure of Empress Elisabeth of Austria (1837–1898), consort of Franz Joseph I (1830–1916). It shows not just a suite of jewellery but how the artist rendered minute details of the precious stones, even the delicate skills employed to join them together.⁵ Evidently de László had a great facility with the depiction of jewellery, but like all his painterly stratagems it was carefully practised and hard won.

Owing to the political and economic convulsions in Europe in the early 20th century only a few of the jewels in de László's portraits have survived intact. Two world wars and the levelling of society meant that opportunities to wear the finest pieces became increasingly rare. Furthermore, swingeing death duties eroded the great ancestral fortunes and in this new social order it was not the family silver but the gem-set jewellery that was first to go. In fear of ignominy the owners of such heirlooms consigned them to the salesrooms anonymously, where, more often than not, they were broken down into loose stones almost immediately after the gavel fell.



Unfinished portrait of Queen Marie of Romania, née Princess Marie of Edinburgh, 1936

Irene Mountbatten, Marchioness of Carisbrooke,
née Lady Irene Denison, 1934





Study for the Tiara and Necklace worn by Elisabeth,
Queen of Hungary and Empress of Austria
1901

One notable exception was the tiara worn in the portrait of Winifred, wife of the 6th Duke of Portland (1863–1954), painted in 1925. In 1902 the Duchess had been invited to be one of Queen Alexandra's canopy bearers at the coronation of Edward VII and so a new tiara was ordered from Cartier to honour the occasion.⁶ It incorporated historic Indian diamonds from the Duke's treasury which, hanging freely, scintillated at the slightest movement of the wearer. In common with most society women of her day Duchess Winifred wore this splendid jewel supported by a substantial 'transformation' or wig, curled to the centre to secure the jewel in place. In the 1920's these bulky hairpieces gave way to a newly fashionable style in which the wearer's own hair was cut short.⁷ Tiaras that had once been worn high on the head were, of necessity, brought low. The Duchess was a great beauty and, adopting this modish but controversial style, she had her hair 'bobbed' and wore the magnificent Portland tiara across her brow when sitting to de László. Again the painter's hand can be detected in this arresting pose when he introduced a theatrical effect with a veil, this time of transparent black gauze. In conjunction with the already dramatic Portland tiara it transfigured Duchess Winifred into an other-worldly beauty, faintly redolent of Norse mythology.



Winifred Anna Cavendish-Bentinck, Duchess of
Portland, née Winifred Dallas-Yorke, 1925



The Marchioness of Londonderry, née the Honourable Edith Chaplin, 1927

Another heirloom tiara, preserved against all the odds described above, was made for the formidable society hostess Theresa, Marchioness of Londonderry (1856–1919). Originally it took the form of a series of diamond apices surmounted by a graduated range of matching pear-shaped pearls.⁸ Yet in the interests of the new coiffures this magnificent tiara was very much diminished by 1927 when de László was asked to paint Edith, the wife of the 7th Marquess. Even though Theresa Londonderry's magnificent gallery of pearls had been pruned back, the tiara remained not only an impressive emblem of rank but one better suited both to the character of Edith Londonderry (1878–1959) and her bobbed hair. Lady Londonderry was a fervent friend of Ramsay Macdonald, the first Labour Prime Minister, but despite his socialist ideals he admired Edith's jewellery as much as she did.⁹

As we have seen, de László, like Ramsay Macdonald, was fascinated by visual intensity of gemstones and jewellery but, more importantly, he found it useful in revealing the character of his sitters. In 1922 the ornaments worn by Princess Anastasia of Greece and Denmark (1878–1923) comprised a tiara and sautoir set with massive emeralds heightened with highly effective brilliant-cut diamonds. The largest emerald in this incomparable array weighed more than 70 carats and the necklace alone was valued at a million dollars. Anastasia, previously known as Nancy, was the young widow of the American tin magnate William B. Leeds (1861–1908) and had inherited a vast fortune of 35 million dollars.¹⁰ In 1920, following an extended love match, Nancy Leeds eventually married Prince Christopher of Greece and Denmark (1888–1940). In portraying the newly elevated Princess Anastasia, de László successfully combined great riches with the dignity of the royal image.

Of all the precious stones that de László included in his portraits there was perhaps none more concentrated or more valuable than the legendary 45.5 carat blue diamond found in the Golconda mines in the 17th century. In 1668 it was purchased by King Louis XIV but was stolen during the French Revolution only to resurface in 1839 in the collection of the rich London banker Thomas Hope, from whom it derives its name. Once described as the most famous diamond in the world, the Hope Diamond was bought from Cartier in 1911 by the American gold mining heiress and socialite Evalyn Walsh McLean (1886–1947) for \$180,000.¹¹ Yet it was not until 1921 that de László accepted the commission to paint her. Evalyn chose to wear both the Hope and another famous diamond called The Star of the East with her hair secured under a bandeau of yet more than 30 impressive diamonds, with earrings to match. Earlier the Hope Diamond had accrued a reputation for being the harbinger of misfortune. True or not, Evalyn was, in the manner of the 'poor little rich girl', a victim of various personal tribulations including infant mortality, blackmail and mental illness. Her portrait as Mrs Edward Beale remains untraced but a colour photograph suggests that de László took little joy in portraying Evalyn, even less her magnificent jewellery.¹²

All that glitter aside, de László, in common with almost all his artistic predecessors, realised the unique and comparatively subtle appeal of pearls. In contrast to precious gemstones, these wonders of nature, being organic are relatively soft, but their value lies in their unique lustre, known as the orient. The eye is drawn to the pearl's inimitable sheen, yet strangely it seems impossible to focus precisely on it. Moreover, rows of drilled pearls are massy, silky smooth and cool. These alluring characteristics make them universally covetable and valuable. Born of the sea and the shell, they are one of the many attributes of Venus and in the lore of the lapidary they stand for love; set in conjunction with diamonds, pearls stand for enduring love. Today such allegories are almost forgotten but they were still very much remembered in de László's time.

This all sounds innocent and charming enough; seemingly a world away from the outlandish status symbols described above. Actually the truth was very different. In



Princess Anastasia of Greece and Denmark, née May Stewart, 1922



Queen Marie of Romania, 1924



Princess Henry of Battenberg, née Princess Beatrice of Great Britain, 1926

the late 19th and early 20th centuries pearls were some of the most coveted and costly materials available to the famous jewellery houses and their luminously wealthy clientele.¹³ Queen Marie and de László adopted them as a status symbol when they allowed an impressive pearl and diamond pendant and matching pear-shaped earrings to compete with her dazzling collection of sapphires. There, albeit in a lower key, they also intoned her formidable royal lineage and rank.

Cartier and Chaumet in Paris, with Tiffany in New York, were the most notable suppliers of pearls and vast fortunes were spent on the most historic and finest necklaces, prized for both their lustre and their size. An almost implausible transaction took place in 1917 when Pierre Cartier acquired a six-storey Renaissance-style mansion at 1051 Fifth Avenue, New York, from the banker Morton F. Plant (1852–1918) in exchange for a two-row pearl necklace valued at \$1,000,000.¹⁴

Philip de László's decision to use pearl jewellery and particularly necklaces in no less than 300 portraits demonstrates that he was fully aware of their immense value, not only aesthetically, but also as status symbols, both to his high society sitters and the portrait painter himself.¹⁵

One of the most notable and historic commissions accepted by de László was to paint the Duchess of York (1900–2002) in 1925 [Cat. 4]. At first reluctant to join the British Royal Family, neither Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, least of all de László, could ever have imagined she would eventually become consort to King George VI, last Empress of India and, as a much-loved widow, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Instead de László painted her as a modest 25 year old, cherishing a long and beautiful string of pearls which perfectly enhanced her décolletage. Presumably this beautiful necklace was a gift from the Duke of York to his fresh young bride after she finally accepted the diamond engagement ring shining out from her other hand.

Although it is hardly a century since Elizabeth's portrait was painted, the world is a very different place where inherited rank, painterly technique and the appreciation of beauty play vastly diminished roles. Yet, conversely, de László's work continues to generate ever-increasing interest and admiration. Apart from being a uniquely valuable record of a vanished elite, it remains a commanding tribute to the brightest possible flaring of artistic genius.

1 Hans Nadelhoffer, *Cartier: Jewelers Extraordinary*, London, 1984, p. 71. This tiara was originally commissioned by Grand Duchess Vladimir (1854–1920) but following the Russian Revolution she was obliged to sell her magnificent collection of jewellery and the sapphire tiara was acquired by Queen Marie.

2 The de Laszlo Archive Trust, *Philip de László Catalogue Raisonné*, accessed January 2024 [online].

3 Nadelhoffer, *ibid.*, p. 236.

4 The de Laszlo Archive Trust, *ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 Geoffrey Munn, *Tiaras: A History of Splendour*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2001, pp. 106–109. The tiara was stolen in 2016 and has not been recovered.

7 Richard Corson, *Fashions in Hair: The First Five Thousand Years*, London, 1965, p. 615.

8 George F. Kunz and Charles Stevenson, *The Book of the Pearl*, London, 1908, p. 31.

9 H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Londonderrys: A Family Portrait*, London, 1979, p. 241.

10 Nadelhoffer, *ibid.*, pl. 58.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 284–285.

12 The de Laszlo Archive Trust, *ibid.*

13 Kunz and Stevenson, *ibid.*, p. 30.

14 Judy Rudoe, *Cartier: 1900–1939*, New York, 1997, p. 11.

15 The de Laszlo Archive Trust, *ibid.*



de Langlois
1925 VII

COTTAGES TO CASTLES

The Quest for de László's Paintings

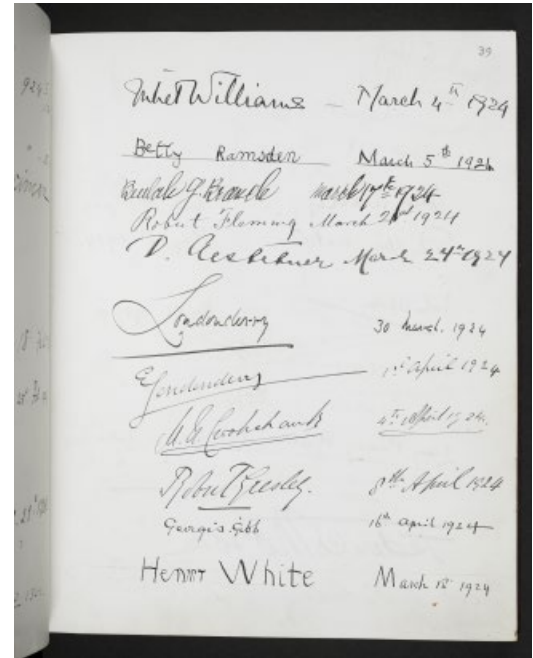
Sandra de Laszlo

My husband Damon is one of seven grandsons of Philip Alexius de László, one of the most celebrated and successful portrait painters in the Grand Manner style. It is hard to say how the idea of producing a catalogue raisonné of the artist's extraordinary oeuvre took root. Ever the optimist, I also had no idea that 30 years later I would still be deeply embroiled in this fascinating but all consuming project. At least now I am ably assisted by a team of talented art historians and noble volunteers who work tirelessly researching, writing, transcribing and translating the artist's vast archive which continuously informs the picture descriptions we compose.

At the outset, I typed or wrote by hand my letters of enquiry to owners to whom I had been introduced one way or another. The de László social circle is still relatively small but I rarely attend a gathering where there is not a link to another portrait, owner or



Paul Ferdinand Anton Laib, 1934



Page from the artist's Sitters' Book, now in the British Library

Scratched name on the glass negative of the portrait of Baron Iván Rubido-Zichy, 1931

relative, recently via a cricket-playing grandson whose team-mate has a grandfather very kindly lending to this exhibition!

For a long time I travelled far and wide, in Britain and abroad, to seek out or inspect the portraits I hoped for. Almost without exception visits would result in finding one I was looking for, another I did not know about and a third or more eluding me. I worked at first from the prodigious collection of plate glass negatives rescued from Paul Laib's studio, a legendary story in itself.

Born in Hamburg, Paul Laib worked as a fine art photographer in London from 1892. He moved to Clareville Grove, Kensington, and practiced as "The Art Reproduction Company." He became a naturalised British subject just before his marriage to musician Harriott Kettle in 1898 and by 1901 they had moved to nearby 3 Thistle Grove, where Laib worked under his own name for the rest of his life. I live nearby and pass these two streets on a regular basis.

Laib's business flourished through commissions to photograph paintings and sculpture by elite British artists of the time. He worked well into old age and died aged over eighty years old in 1958,

leaving the business to continue largely under his son, Eric Paul Laib, who retired in 1972 shortly before his seventieth birthday.

To clear his father's studio, Eric positioned a skip under one of the windows to dispose of the multitudinous glass negatives; however, seeing the name "de László" on so many boxes containing the negatives he had the great wit to look up the name in the London telephone book. My husband Damon took the call and immediately agreed to save the collection from its fate. It comprised some 22,000 items. I clearly recall seeing the negatives in their battered cardboard boxes in the potting shed at the de Laszlo family home in Surrey, stacked on temporary metal shelving with sheets of old telephone directories layered between them.

In 1974 the plates were gifted to The Witt Library at The Courtauld Institute which made thumbnail prints of some 1,000 de László pictures and bound them in books. Laib had scratched the sitters' names on many negatives so they could be arranged alphabetically. This record, together with the artist's Sitters' Books, provided two unique starting blocks for my research.



Soon after their first meeting, Lucy Guinness posed for the figure of the English tourist seen to the right in the *Hofbräuhaus*, 1892



The Minot family in the grounds of Berwick Lodge in Ryde on the Isle of Wight, 1898

The Sitters' Book in two volumes comprises nearly 4,000 entries, the first being that of Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria, on 17 March 1899, and the last The Duke of Connaught in October 1937. Towards the end of his life de László estimated he had portrayed some 2,700 people; not every sitter signed but many visitors recorded their presence in the artist's studio in splendid bold hands. These books are held in The British Library and have recently been photographed, which allows us to attach the relevant pages to the published entries in the catalogue raisonné and provides historical context to nearly 40 years of unique encounters in the studios, palaces and other places de László painted in all over the western world.

To find and verify pictures and envisage Philip & his wife's travels it has been very much a game of following in their footsteps! We have actually walked above the old wooden platform that Lucy Guinness and her father trod in Valais, Switzerland, in 1891, up the Gorge de Trient and the nearby 'Pissevache' cascade. We also made a memorable visit to the Hofbrauhaus in Munich where de László made many studies for his famous picture and including his future wife whom he had only just met.

On the Isle of Wight we discovered and visited Berwick Lodge in Ryde which helped the artist on the path to his destiny since the commission he undertook there from the Minot family allowed

him to come to England in 1898 and ask permission from Lucy's forbidding mother for her daughter's hand in marriage. Old Mrs Guinness described her future son-in-law as a "fascinating but dangerous man." We later saw the handsome double portrait of Mr Minot's daughter-in-law and grandson quite by chance in a museum in Santa Barbara, California.

Some of my loveliest journeys of discovery have been in Scotland. Damon and I were welcomed to a tiny fisherman's cottage in the village of Findhorn. There in an upright chair in the kitchen we met the Laird himself, Viscount Stuart. He was quite frail and his sister had gone to great trouble to dress him most elegantly in a long cream silk dressing gown with a coloured cravat and I recall his knee suspenders holding up the most perfect black socks. We were lucky enough to see the two beautiful portraits of his parents in the small sitting room at the back of the house. Later sold and alas separated, they remain together only in the catalogue raisonné.

On the same trip we toured the castellated Scone Palace as we knew two important portraits were hanging in drawing rooms on the ground floor. As we went through the rooms I mentioned to one of the guides that I was with a grandson of the artist. Damon was being rather shy and trying to shrink into the wainscoting so on we went. But as we left the room I heard the lady in question add to her description saying: "A grandson of the artist has just this minute been through this room." The two portraits are of Lady Dorothea Carnegie, painted in Portugal in 1927 when her father Sir Lancelot was British Ambassador there, and one of her husband Mungo, later 7th & 8th Earl of Mansfield, painted in 1930. Lady Dorothea would have been a natural to include in this exhibition but her portrait is hung on a wall covered in extremely fragile Lyon 1842 silk and impracticable to remove.

Another Scottish visit found us near Oban, with all our children this time who had got quite accustomed to such detours, on our way back from a holiday on Mull. Jane Nelson welcomed us with other members of her family to see two fine portraits but the conversation soon turned to farming as she was a renowned breeder and owner of a herd of Highland cattle. We at the time had a very small herd of Piedmontese beasts.

Perhaps the most memorable Scottish adventure was to Wemyss Castle in 1987 where we were lucky enough to meet Lady Victoria Wemyss, then aged 97 and very energetic. In her youth she had founded the Wemyss School of Needlework to give employment to the miners' wives and help them go into service. She was still very much involved in this enterprise and I think we must first have met her in the school where I was commissioning a tapestry canvas to work. On hearing our name she invited Damon, our two friends and me back to the Castle to show us the portraits there. I recall she was cross with her family at the time for not allowing her to drive up and down the drive. Nonetheless, we had the most splendid tour, the highlight being the magnificently elegant portrait of her mother, wife of the 6th Duke, wearing the Portland tiara, which was



Mrs Joseph Grafton Minot and her son Grafton, 1898

displayed on an easel in the drawing room. The portrait continues to be beloved by the family [illustrated in Geoffrey Munn's essay in this catalogue].

Another memorable journey turned out to be a complete red herring. After a delicious luncheon with a charming lady and her son, who had driven miles to join us, we repaired to the main house and undid the shutters in the huge dark dining room only to find the portraits were by a completely different artist and clearly signed as such. I felt so very much for her in her desire to contribute to our work.

During a visit to New York, we found ourselves surrounded by police and security people on the same floor of our hotel. Ever curious, I managed to glean from one of them that George Herbert Walker Bush, 41st President of the United States, was our neighbour and wrote a note to him as I knew his grandmother, Mrs George Herbert Walker, had been painted by de László but the portrait remained untraced. We retired for the night and were deeply asleep when the telephone rang. Damon answered it to hear a strident voice saying:

Dorothea Helena Carnegie painted before her
marriage to the 7th Earl of Mansfield, 1927





Chief Medicine Eagle, 1923



Lady Northcliffe, née Mary Milner, 1911

“I have the President of the United States on the line for you.” He sat bolt upright in bed and had the most extraordinarily sensible conversation with the enthusiastic President regarding the how and where of his grandmother’s portrait, which has now been fully catalogued.

I hope I will be forgiven for sharing our wonderful meeting with the late Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, having been invited to tea by her niece-in-law, the widow of Andrew Elphinstone. One is supposed to arrive very punctually when meeting royalty but in some situations it might be a while before the personage arrives. However, the present circumstances were extremely agreeable and our small group chatted for at least two hours in our hostess’s pretty home in Worplesdon.

Her Majesty arrived fresh from a luncheon party at about 5 o’clock. She could not have been more delightful, even feigning not to notice when I dropped a cup of tea almost in her lap. By

then she was 97 years of age and her memories of being painted when 25 had somewhat dimmed. But she still showed such interest and enthusiasm and recalled “de László’s marble shoulder” with a gracious smile. She left for a cocktail party at about 7 pm, still looking energetic and, as always, immaculate.

It is hard to say which picture has been our most exciting discovery. One can write twenty letters or emails in pursuit of such a work and then it will suddenly turn up at an auction house or, more frequently nowadays, via our website. One of the most memorable is the drawing of Chief Medicine Eagle that we were sure had been owned by the Paramount film company; this turned up as a result of a ‘runner’ finding it in a private person’s ownership and consigning it to Comenos Fine Arts in Boston without provenance.

I had searched for the masterwork study portrait of Lady Northcliffe through her entire extended family (so I thought) for some 25 years when only recently a kind ‘sideways’ descendant let us know via our



Mrs Arthur Graham Glasgow, née Margaret Branch, 1910

website that it was being sold. We now have a fine colour photograph of the painting but as yet no response from our letter to the new owner, which the auction houses kindly pass on for us, so it has for the present slipped into the shadows once more.

There have been many other adventures abroad, all etched clearly in my mind, but too many to describe in full. In Ireland I was once standing on a stepladder measuring an enormous picture, having arranged this with the owner who was away at the time. An Indian butler who spoke little English had let us into the house. The estate manager burst into the room, furious and even frightened by our presence, as no one had thought to inform him. Fortunately, this was in the very early days of mobile phones and the owner was found at Ascot and able to soothe the situation before the Garda were summoned.

Madrid and Buenos Aires greeted Susan de Laszlo and me with generous welcomes, both in palaces and modest homes, and in one case we met a charming elderly sitter who had been a mere boy at the time of painting and was full of valuable reminiscences.

I will also never forget meeting the exiled King Michael of Romania in Switzerland, stopping off during our train journey on our way to a skiing holiday with our son William and sharing his excitement as the King and his delightful wife Queen Anne Marie attentively showed us their de László paintings in the sunny drawing room.

None of this could be achieved without the support of the “de László team”, an incredible group of individuals, past, present and I trust future, whom I so respect and appreciate – you know who you are. However, today’s personal mention and gratitude must go to Katherine Field, Senior Editor of the catalogue raisonné, who has curated this exhibition. My thanks go too to Steven Parissien, who inherited Mark Bills’ idea to put on the *Master of Elegance* and has carried it with equal enthusiasm and energy. Last, but certainly not least, my thanks go to Emma Boyd, Keeper of Art and Place, who has so efficiently undertaken vital mechanics and arrangements at Gainsborough’s House.

Prince Michael of Romania, later His Majesty
King Michael I of Romania, 1936



ROYAL PATRONAGE

De László was first recommended to the British Royal Family in 1897 by Queen Victoria's daughter Victoria, Dowager Empress Friedrich of Germany. The artist's great hope to paint the matriarch of Europe's royal houses was not realised despite his invitation to Windsor Castle in 1899 where he "saw the old lady" and spent the day admiring the works of Holbein, Dürer, Van Dyck, Velázquez, Reynolds and Lawrence.¹ In 1900 Queen Victoria commissioned him to paint Field Marshal Sir George White, heroic commander of the garrison at the siege of Ladysmith during the Second Boer War. He also secured the patronage of Sir Ernest Cassel, financial advisor to the Prince of Wales, soon to be Edward VII. Before the artist's move to England he had painted the Queen's cousin Prince George, 2nd Duke of Cambridge, Prince Adolphus of Teck and his wife, née Lady Margaret Grosvenor. The Welsh-born Daisy, Princess of Pless, had also visited his studio in Vienna with Princess Marie of Edinburgh who, as Queen of Romania, commissioned her own portrait [Cat. 6] and those of her family [Cat. 7].

Following Queen Victoria's long years of mourning and seclusion, Edward VII emerged as an entirely different and *au courant* monarch. His capacity for engaging closely with people, crafted during long years travelling the world as Prince of Wales, made him tremendously popular and well-informed. As King, his appreciation for fashion, society, travel, art and science proved highly influential. His visit to de László's solo exhibition at the Fine Art Society in Bond Street with Queen Alexandra at the invitation of Count Albert Mensdorff-Pouilly, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to the Court of St James's, cemented the artist's reputation in Britain. De László was immediately summoned to Buckingham Palace to paint their daughter Princess Victoria and then the King and Queen themselves.

Patronage by the King of England led to commissions from the Royal Houses of Greece, Portugal and Spain. In 1910 de László visited Spain with a letter of introduction to the Queen Mother María Cristina from Princess Henry of Battenberg, youngest daughter of Queen Victoria and mother of the Queen of Spain. Portraits of the King and Queen were arranged and the artist later wrote:

The portrait of a Sovereign must be not only his picture, but must represent also the history of his times. This in itself is a great responsibility. The life of H.M. the King of Spain, with all his affairs of State and ceremonies, is exceptionally fully occupied; even when His Majesty honoured me with his presence in my studio, he was surrounded by officials all requiring the attention of their Sovereign; so that, in spite of all the interest His Majesty showed in his portrait, the painting was done in circumstances in which it was doubly difficult to achieve one's highest ambition in portraiture and which demanded far more concentration than usual.²

De László was innately sociable and thrived in his interactions with people throughout his life. He was a natural conversationalist and communicator, both in person and through his art and had an instinct for observing the minutiae of decorum required by the highest echelons of society, a trait that was vital to the advancement of his career. When recalling his first royal commission to paint Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria in 1894, the twenty-five-year-old described how he responded to the atmosphere like a chameleon and attributed his success at court to the fact that he acted in the right way.





Queen Victoria Eugenia of Spain, née Princess Victoria Eugénie of Battenberg, 1926

His tact and discretion recommended him to his royal sitters and they welcomed him warmly into their private worlds. While painting King Edward VII, the Monarch allowed confidential business to be discussed by his Private Secretary in the artist's presence exclaiming: "Lord Knollys will read to me and you won't have ears, you understand!"³ On de László's return to Windsor Castle after painting Princess Leopold von Hohenzollern at Sigmaringen in the summer of 1907, he presented the King with a personal letter from Princess Auguste Viktoria von Hohenzollern which she had asked the artist to deliver by hand. Edward VII invited de László into his "secret shrine" to see some of his most treasured possessions, including portraits by Winterhalter of Queen Alexandra, Empress Elisabeth and Princess Leopold as well as relics belonging to King Charles I.⁴ This degree of intimacy is suggested in de László's portrait of the King, which presents the man as much as his position and is far removed from the formality and grandeur of earlier centuries of royal portraits.

De László described his impressions of the King "whom I would call, amongst all the Sovereigns I have met, the most delightful, and most human Grand Seigneur, and if he was not, himself, artistic in his nature, he appreciated Art and supported it, but first of all his greatest quality was his interest in humanity and his keen political foresight. He was certainly a man who could not be led by any professional politician."⁵ In 1909 the King appointed de László a Member of the Royal Victorian Order and the artist always declared that this was the honour of which he was most proud.

The artist's relationship with King Edward VII's son George V was less agreeable. De László's links with patrons like the German Emperor Wilhelm II became extremely damaging during the First World War. King George V had led by example and distanced himself from his Germanic surname and connections leading to the birth of the House of Windsor. This had a profound influence in many circles. The King never commissioned a portrait from him, favouring English artists and Royal Academicians like Sir Luke Fildes, Sir Arthur Cope, Richard Jack and Oswald Birley. With the abdication of Edward VIII in 1936, de László found some satisfaction as the new King and his wife had long been his enthusiastic patrons [Cat. 4]. Unfortunately, the artist's health was compromised and he was unable to paint the Coronation. However, his final royal portrait was fitting as it was the Duke of Connaught, the last surviving child of Queen Victoria [Cat. 18].

By the end of his career de László had painted over two hundred portraits of members of the Royal Houses of Europe, more than any other artist in history. While painting Queen Marie of Romania in 1936 de László wrote in his diary: "I am an artist of the world, and paint history."⁶ These portraits provide a glimpse into the personal and public lives of the Royal Families of Europe and their changing fortunes in the 20th century.

1 Letter from de László to Elek Lippich, 12 July 1899, Lippich Bequest, Manuscripts Archive of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest.

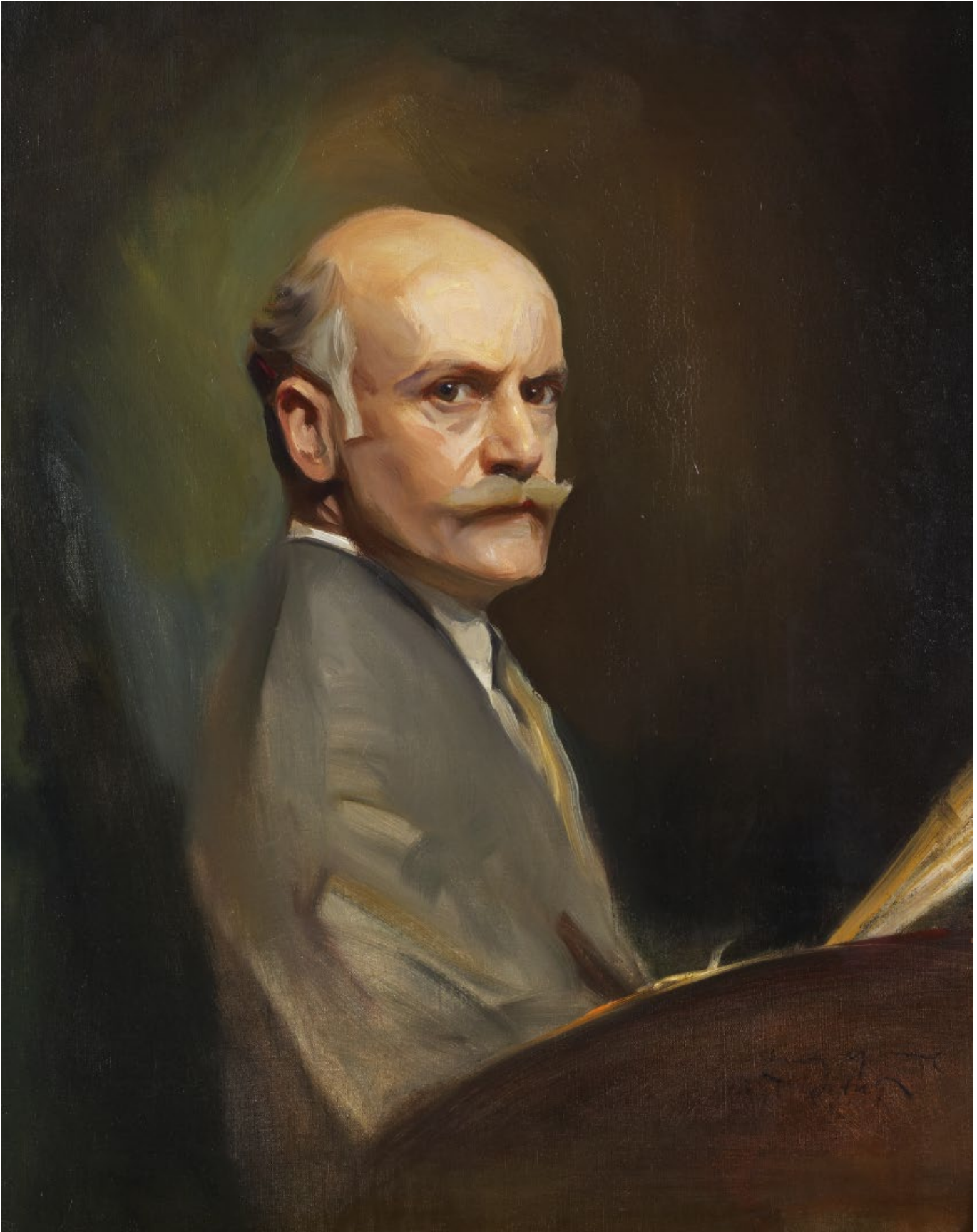
2 DLA113-0003, Philip de László, 'Painting a King', *The Evening News*, undated.

3 Rutter 1939, p. 240.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

5 DLA016-0032, letter from de László to Sigmund Münz, 27 December 1928.

6 Rutter 1939, p. 352.



1

Self-portrait

1925

Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 61 cm (30 x 24 in.)

Inscribed lower right: *Study of me / 1925 P A de L*

Private Collection

The artist was born Fülöp Laub on 30 April 1869 in Pest, Hungary.¹ His father Adolf was a tailor and mother Johanna a seamstress. He was the eldest son of a family of nine of whom only five children survived. From an early age he was driven to succeed as an artist and was employed as a set painter, porcelain and maiolica painter and sign writer before being apprenticed in 1884 to the famous portrait photographer Sándor Strelisky. This enabled him to support his mother and siblings, his father having largely disappeared from family life. While fulfilling his three-year contract he entered the School of Applied Arts part-time in 1884, attending Sunday mornings and two evenings a week. In 1886 he was accepted at the National Hungarian Royal Drawing School, where he earned his first state scholarship.

At the young age of sixteen his talent won him a place as a student at the National Academy of Arts (1885–1889) with Bertalan Székely and Károly Lotz as masters. He then attended the Royal Bavarian Academy of Art in Munich twice (1889–1890 and 1891–1892), under Professor Sándor von Liezen-Mayer and the Académie Julian in Paris (1890–1891) under Jules-Joseph Lefebvre and Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant.

During his formative years de László devoted himself to history and genre painting. His most important works during this period were *Felician Zách*, *L'Incroyable* and *The Hofbräuhaus*. In 1889 he received one of his first portrait commissions from Dr Pál Galambos, an influential lawyer from Ó-Becse in rural Hungary. His first royal commission came in 1894 through his friend and mentor Elek Lippich, Secretary of the Fine Arts Department in the Hungarian

Ministry of Education, to paint the Royal Family of Bulgaria. This was followed by a portrait of Emperor Franz Joseph in 1899 and a commission from Queen Victoria to paint General Sir George White in 1900.

1900 was a decisive year for de László. Having painted members of the German Imperial Family in Potsdam, he travelled to Rome in the spring to paint Pope Leo XIII. This picture won him international fame and the Grand Gold Medal at the Paris International Exhibition that year. He was finally able to marry Lucy Guinness whom he had met while studying in Munich eight years previously. They lived in the studio-house de László had built in Budapest before moving to Vienna in 1903 and then settling in England in 1907. They had five sons, Henry, Stephen, Paul, Patrick and John. Their daughter Eva, named for Lucy's sister [Cat. 38], died aged only three months in Budapest in 1903.

De László consolidated his reputation world-wide in the first decade of the twentieth century and was proud to be appointed as Member of the Royal Victorian Order by King Edward VII in 1909. His great patron Lord Selborne encapsulated his extraordinary achievement: "Has any one painter ever before painted so many interesting and historical personages?" By the time of his death in 1937 he held twenty-two orders and had seventeen medals of merit bestowed on him by royal and presidential sitters.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;

By descent

¹ In Hungary surnames take precedence and in the country of his birth he is known as Laub Fülöp. He and his brother Marcell took the Hungarian name László in 1891.

2

Baron Hugo von Reischach

1899

Oil on cardboard, 73 x 49.5 cm (28 ¾ x 19 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *Sr. Excellenz / Baron v. Reischach / m. Verehrung / László F. E. / 1899* [To his Excellency / Baron v. Reischach / with esteem / László F. E. / 1899]

Private Collection

This portrait is representative of the close links between the German Imperial and English Royal Families and a milestone in the chronology of de László's patronage. The artist was introduced to the Imperial family in 1898 through the Ratibor family, one of his most important patrons at this stage of his career. The Dowager Empress Friedrich, née Princess Royal of Great Britain, had seen his portraits exhibited in Frankfurt in 1897 and wrote to her mother Queen Victoria to recommend him. At her request, he sent two Ratibor portraits for her approval. Baron Hugo von Reischach was married to Princess Margarethe von Ratibor, the youngest daughter of Viktor II, Duke of Ratibor, whose family estate Rauden was in Silesia.

The theatricality of this portrait shows clear evidence of the artist's first visit to England in 1898 when he admired the 18th-century school of British portrait painters. He began to paint study portraits that are more loosely painted and capture fleeting expressions of character and movement. This was to prove a hallmark of his success in England following his move to London in 1907. De László's close friend Gábor de Térey, a prominent art historian, pointed out this influence in his review of the 1899 Conversationshaus exhibition at Baden Baden, which included a now untraced portrait of the sitter: "this portrait remains an excellent achievement and it reminds us of the English manner of portraiture during Gainsborough's time."¹ De Térey was himself married to an English woman and spent extended periods there. Fellow critic and friend of de László's, Ludwig Abels (1867–1937), also made this comparison, observing "a new modern touch: the Anglo-Saxon trait of nonchalant elegance" in de László's portraits.²

Baron Hugo von Reischach was born to an old Württemberg family on 1 September 1854 in Frankfurt am Main. He had a long career at the Imperial Court where his gregariousness, fine horsemanship and general appearance made him ideally suited for ceremonial duties.

In the present portrait he wears the uniform of Hofmarshall to the Dowager Empress Friedrich, whom he served in this capacity from 1888 until her death in 1901. Among Reischach's duties was the management of her stables, a task he carried out enthusiastically as the Empress and her younger daughters were keen horsewomen and he himself was considered one of the finest riders in the army. After the Empress's death, Reischach retired but in 1905 returned to Court duties when German Emperor Wilhelm II appointed him Oberstallmeister (Master of the Horse) with responsibility not only for the vast stables and studs but also for carriages and motor cars. With the abolition of the monarchy after the First World War, Hugo von Reischach lived in quiet retirement. He died in Berlin on 12 August 1934.

Provenance:

Inventory of Schloss Nussdorf der Herren von Reischach, Eberdingen, Germany;
Sold K&K Auktionen in Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany, 2 March 2018, lot 43;
Private Collection

Exhibited:

- BADA Art & Antiques Fair, London, *Philip de László: 150th Anniversary Exhibition*, 20–26 March 2019, no. 2
- Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, *Philip de László: "I am an artist of the world..."*, 27 September 2019–5 January 2020, no. 2

Selected Bibliography:

- Hart-Davis & Somfalvi 2019, ill. 39
- BADA 2019, pp. 10, 26, 28, ill. p. 29
- Hungarian National Gallery 2019, pp. 52, 54, ill. p. 55

¹ Gábor de Térey, 'Brief aus Baden-Baden', *Pester Lloyd*, 20 August 1899, p. 5.

² Ludwig Abels, 'Das Werk des Filipp [sic] E. László', *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk*, vol. 3, 1900, p. 198.





3
*Princess Andrew of Greece and Denmark, née Princess
 Alice of Battenberg*

1907

Oil on canvas, 130 x 95 cm (51 1/8 x 37 1/2 in.)

Inscribed lower right: *P.A. László 1907. VII*

The Royal Collection / HM King Charles III

In July 1907, just after the success of de László's first solo exhibition in England at the Fine Art Society in London and the newly achieved patronage of Edward VII, de László was invited to paint Princess Alice at Schloss Heiligenberg, the home of her grandfather Prince Alexander of Hesse, set in the hills above Darmstadt.

There were close links through marriage between the English and Greek Royal Families and the Dukes of Hesse. De László painted many members of these families throughout his career. In 1922 he painted Princess Alice for the second time in his London studio. His archive reveals the closeness of their friendship as Princess Alice sent him photographs of herself and her children over many years and there is also an informal photograph of them relaxing in the artist's garden at 3 Fitzjohn's Avenue.

This composition owes much to the work of the 18th-century British School. Examples include Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Elizabeth Falconer, Mrs Stanhope, as Contemplation*¹ and George Romney's numerous depictions of Emma Hamilton, which portray the sitter in interpretations of classical dress and in the guise of a poetic muse to elevate the intellectual status of the portrait.

Princess Victoria Alice Elizabeth Julia Marie of Battenberg was born on 25 February 1885, the eldest child of Prince Louis of Battenberg and Princess Victoria of Hesse, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Alice was born at Windsor Castle and brought up in England, Darmstadt and Malta. On 7 October 1903 she married Prince Andrew of Greece and Denmark, the fourth son of King George I of the Hellenes and his wife Grand Duchess Olga Constantinovna of Russia. They had four daughters: Margarita, Theodora, Cecilie and Sophie. Their son Philip married Princess Elizabeth of York, later Queen Elizabeth II [Cat. 5].

Her life was marked by wars, revolutions and long periods in exile. After the defeat of Greece in the war against Turkey and the military coup leading to the deposition and second exile of King Constantine I in 1921, her husband Prince Andrew was arrested and sentenced to be executed. On the intervention of King George V and Lord Curzon he was released and taken on a British warship to Corfu



De László standing next to his portrait of Princess Andrew of Greece and Denmark with his sitter and her husband seated alongside, 1907

with his wife and family. They subsequently settled in Saint-Cloud, France. In 1930 she suffered a breakdown and was diagnosed as schizophrenic. After her recovery she and Prince Andrew spent decreasing amounts of time together before she returned to Athens alone in 1938. She was in Athens during the German occupation in the Second World War and secretly harboured a Jewish family; for this she was recognised as "Righteous Among the Nations" by Israel's Holocaust memorial institution, Yad Vashem.

After the war, she remained in Greece and founded an Orthodox nursing order of nuns known as the Christian Sisterhood of Martha and Mary. King Constantine II was deposed in 1967 and military rule was once again invoked. She was invited to live at Buckingham Palace by her son and his wife Queen Elizabeth II and she died there on 5 December 1969. Her remains were transferred to the Church of St Mary Magdalene, above the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, in Jerusalem in 1988.

Exhibited:

- The Dowdeswell Galleries, London, *An Exhibition of Portraits by Philip A. László*, June and July 1908, no. 23
- Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 36

Selected Bibliography:

- Schleinitz 1913, p. 82, ill. pl. 98
- Williams 1921, p. 65
- Rutter 1939, p. 246
- Hugo Vickers, *Alice, Princess Andrew of Greece*, London, 2000, pp. 78, 179, 187–188, 197, 198, ill. front cover and spine (detail)
- Field 2019, p. 106, ill.

¹ Sold at Christie's, London, 8 December 2015, lot 41.



4
*The Duchess of York, née Lady
 Elizabeth Angela Marguerite
 Bowes Lyon*

1925

Oil on canvas, 89.5 x 68.5
 cm (35 ¼ x 27 in.)

Inscribed lower right: *de
 László / 1925. VIII*

The Royal Collection /
 HM King Charles III

De László has captured the vivacious warmth that endeared the future Queen Elizabeth to the British public and made her such a beloved figure for the next eighty years. This portrait was painted in the second year of her marriage to Prince Albert, Duke of York, second son of George V, just before she discovered she was pregnant with her first child, the future Queen Elizabeth II [Cat. 5].

This is one of the artist's best known portraits. As early as 1928 it featured on the cover of an authorised biography of the Duchess written by Lady Cynthia Asquith. The author wrote to the artist, on behalf of her publisher Hutchinson & Co., requesting permission for it to be copied for a window display at Harrods to promote the book.¹ The artist's archive also contains many letters from people seeking a signed photograph of the portrait.

In 1917 de László painted the sitter's sister Lady Rose, the first of many portraits of the Bowes Lyon family. In July 1925 their mother, the Countess of Strathmore, asked the artist to make a sketch of her daughter Elizabeth: "She felt that her daughter was so young that a head alone would not typify her and wanted her figure, even if described by only a few strokes. She also told him that she was very anxious that the portrait should be under life-size, to emphasize her small and graceful build. De László carried out these wishes, but instead of a sketch he painted a finished portrait of Her Royal Highness."²

Years later Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother recalled de László draping her with a swathe of blue material from his studio and how he painted the "marble shoulder."³ She enjoyed sitting for him as he painted quickly and kept her entertained with stories. De László



The portrait was included in the artist's exhibition at the Charpentier Gallery in Paris in 1931

met the Duchess again in 1931 when she attended his studio with her mother Countess Strathmore, who was being painted there. Inspired by her charm he offered to paint her again in July. Film footage of her in the garden at Fitzjohn's Avenue and with her husband and children at Frogmore show the closeness of their friendship with the artist. They appear relaxed and joking as the soon-to-be King pretends to cut his daughters' hair with gardening shears.

The sitter's brother David Bowes Lyon married Rachel Spender-Clay on 6 February 1929 and was given this portrait as a wedding present. *The Tatler* reported a reception a few days before the wedding at the home of Lady Astor, the bridegroom's aunt and: "Mr. Bowes-Lyon arrived proudly carrying de László's portrait of his sister, the Duchess, which was another of the innumerable wedding presents."⁴ Poignantly, it returned to the possession of the sitter after her brother's death aged just fifty-nine in 1962.

Lady Elizabeth Angela Marguerite Bowes Lyon was born on 4 August 1900, the youngest of the four daughters and ninth of the ten children of Claude George, 14th Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne and his wife Nina Cavendish-Bentinck. As a child she and her younger brother David, to whom she was particularly devoted, were nicknamed 'The 2 Benjamins.' At the age of twelve Lady Elizabeth attended The Misses Birtwistle's Academy at 30 Sloane Street in London for two terms. Her education, both prior to that time and afterwards, was conducted entirely at home by governesses and

her mother. During the First World War, the family home, Glamis Castle, was turned into a hospital for injured soldiers and the young Elizabeth was active in helping to care for the patients and guests.

She married the Duke of York (1895–1952), later King George VI, on 26 April 1923 at Westminster Abbey. When her husband ascended to the throne in 1936, she became Queen consort and a Lady of the Order of the Garter and Lady of the Order of the Thistle. They had two daughters: Princess Elizabeth Alexandra Mary (1926–2022) and Princess Margaret Rose (1930–2002). On the death of the King on 6 February 1952, Princess Elizabeth succeeded as Queen Elizabeth II. The sitter became known as Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother and died at Windsor, in her one-hundred-and-second year, on 30 March 2002.

Provenance:

The sitter's mother, by whom given in 1929 as a wedding gift to the sitter's brother;

The Hon. Sir David Bowes Lyon;

The sitter;

By descent in the Royal Family

Exhibited:

- The French Gallery, London, *A Series of Portraits and Studies by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, June 1927, no. 4
- York City Art Gallery, York, *Jubilee Exhibition*, June 1929
- Hôtel Jean Charpentier, Paris, *Exposition P. A. de László*, June 1931, no. 3
- National Portrait Gallery, London, *The Queen Mother: A Celebration*, 27 June–28 September 1980, no. 8
- Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 98
- National Portrait Gallery, London, *Philip de László Portraits*, 27 March–5 September 2010, no. 9
- Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, *Philip de László: "I am an artist of the world..."*, 27 September 2019–5 January 2020, no. 14

Selected Bibliography:

- Cynthia Asquith, *The Duchess of York*, London, 1928, ill. frontispiece and dust cover
- Rutter 1939, pp. 358 & 374
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, pp. 37, 57, 162–163, ill. pp. 30, 162
- National Portrait Gallery 2010, p. 12–13, ill. pl. 9 & front cover
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, pp. 193–194, ill. 108
- Geoffrey Munn, *Wartski: The First One Hundred and Fifty Years*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2015, p. 168, ill.
- Hart-Davis & Somfalvi 2019, ill. 138
- Hungarian National Gallery 2019, pp. 39, 78, ill. p. 79

¹ DLA088-0059, letter from Cynthia Asquith to de László, 16 August 1928.

² Rutter 1939, p. 358.

³ As told to Sandra de Laszlo by the sitter in 1997.

⁴ *The Tatler*, London, 13 February 1929.



5
Princess Elizabeth of York

1933

Oil on canvas, 90.2 x 69.3 cm (35
½ x 27 ¼ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László / 1933 VI*

The Royal Collection /
HM King Charles III

On 27 May 1933 de László wrote to Louis Wiley of *The New York Times*: “I am just beginning a portrait of the little Princess Elizabeth, the grand-daughter of the King, and daughter of the Duke and Duchess of York, and a most intelligent and beautiful little girl of seven years old. She is enormously popular, and this picture will be included in the exhibition together with those of her parents, and her grandparents, the Earl and Countess of Strathmore. As you know, the little girl is at present looked upon as the future Queen of Great Britain.”¹

Sittings took place in the artist’s London studio and a film in his archive shows the Princess wearing the same dress descending the steps into the garden. De László described his young sitter as “intelligent and full of character,” but “very sleepy and restless” at

her second sitting after having attended Queen Mary’s birthday luncheon party.² He later went to Windsor Great Park to paint the Copper Horse statue seen in the background.

De László first met Princess Elizabeth while painting pendant portraits of her parents, the Duke and Duchess of York in 1931 [see also Cat. 4]. The artist recalled that “it was a very happy moment when one day the little Princess Elizabeth called at the studio with her Lady-in-Waiting. There was no sign of shyness and she was greatly interested in the portraits of her parents, and made some very amusing remarks.”³ On 31 May de László wrote to his friend Frederick Balfour of Dawyk: “I am at present very much engrossed in my portrait of the little Princess Elizabeth. Her parents often come here, they are very much interested in the progress of the picture.”⁴

In an interview with the *Dundee Courier* de László described how, after sitting for her portrait, the Princess remarked confidentially, “I am going to tell you something, Mr de Laszlo, that will surprise you.” “Oh”, said the artist, “What is that?” “I paint, too, and I’m a very good painter. I’ll bring some of my work next time and show you.” The Princess and her grandmother, the Countess of Strathmore, also visited the Dundee City Art Gallery when the portrait was exhibited there in August 1933. Finding the gallery closed their chauffeur found a helpful employee at the local reference library to allow them access. Princess Elizabeth “thought that her own portrait was very nice, and with youthful candour explained that although the portrait was supposed to represent an outdoor scene, it was really painted indoors.”⁶

Immediately after completion, the portrait was exhibited to great acclaim at the Knoedler Gallery in June 1933 with *The Daily Times* writing:

Who are the greatest feminine personalities of the day? Royalty, politicians, and hostesses hurried away from their breakfast tables yesterday, despite the prospect of a long day of receptions, dinner parties, and dances, lasting well into this morning, to discover the judgement of a painter – the famous Mr. Philip de Laszlo. The answer was typical of this little wizard of colour, whose studio is frequented by so many well-known people – Princess Elizabeth of York and the late Anny Ahlers [Cat. 16]. Their portraits were two of the outstanding impressions of this exhibition in Old Bond-street ... Princess Elizabeth sat enthroned among them all, in white frills and a blue sash, but her gilt chair was under a typical English sky, and the glimpse of English countryside was a reminder that she was Elizabeth of England ... The portrait is for the Duchess of York, and the Duke specially requested that the Princess should be given her correct name in the catalog. It is ‘Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth of York.’⁷

This is one of the artist’s most famous and widely reproduced portraits. It was distributed in reproduction to friends all over the world, from Hungary to America, and signed many to be auctioned for charity.⁸ Princess Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1953 and at the time of her death in 2022 was one of only two de László sitters still alive.

Exhibited:

- M. Knoedler & Co., London, *Portraits by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 21 June–22 July 1933, no. 18
- Dundee Art Galleries, Dundee, August 1933
- The Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts, Glasgow, *Autumn Exhibition*, 1933, no. 238
- The Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London, *Royal Children*, 5 November–March 1964
- National Portrait Gallery, London, *Elizabeth II: Portraits of Sixty Years*, 14 November 1986–22 March 1987
- Sotheby’s, London, *Childhood: A Loan Exhibition of Works of Art*, 2–27 January 1988, no. 450
- The Royal Society of Portrait Painters, The Mall Galleries, London, *Golden Jubilee Exhibition*, 2–19 May 2002 [not in catalogue]
- Christie’s, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 124

Selected Bibliography:

- Bury 1933, p. 17, ill.
- Cynthia Asquith and Eileen Bigland, eds., *The Princess Elizabeth Gift Book, In Aid of the Princess Elizabeth of York Hospital for Children*, London, 1935, ill. frontis.
- Rutter 1939, p. 374
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, pp. 190–191, ill. p. 191
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 245, ill. 126
- Hart-Davis & Somfalvi 2019, ill. 162
- Hungarian National Gallery 2019, p. 78

1 DLA021-0110, letter from de László to Louis Wiley, 27 May 1933. Wiley was Business Manager for *The New York Times* after its acquisition by Adolphus Ochs. Both were painted by the artist.

2 Rutter 1939, p. 374.

3 ‘A Painter Looks at the Famous’, *Sunday Mercury*, 9 April 1933, p. 10.

4 DLA020-0054, letter from de László to Frederick Balfour, 31 May 1933.

5 ‘De Laszlo Portrait in Dundee’, *Dundee Courier*, 16 December 1933, p. 4.

6 ‘Princess in Dundee: Locked Door at Art Galleries’, *Dundee Courier*, 18 August 1933, p. 7.

7 *The Daily Times*, 21 June 1933.

8 See DLA024-0308, letter from de László to John Robertson, 19 May 1937.



6
Queen Marie of Romania, née Princess Marie of Edinburgh

1924

Oil on canvas, 92 x 70 cm (37 ½ x 27 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *de László / LONDON 1924.V.*

Muzeul Național Peleş, Sinaia, Romania



Gold bracelet given to Queen Marie by her father Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, incorporating portrait miniatures of her and her siblings

De László first met the sitter in Vienna in 1899 when she was still Crown Princess Marie of Romania, though she did not commission a portrait until she came to London on an official state visit in 1924.¹ Queen Marie visited de László's studio on 21 May and recorded one of the most detailed surviving accounts of sitting to the artist. It is worth quoting in full:

He wants of course to make something that would stand out from all he has done... he wants to have it for his exhibition in June. So he asked me to put on my Russian sapphire and diamond diadem,² he draped me in gold, with a sort of golden veil on my head, a marvellous harmony of gold in gold with only eyes and the sapphires a blue touch in the whole. He is a stupendously quick worker and it is wonderful to see him work, he is [so] full of delight when he begins a picture which enchants him that one feels he would like to shout with joy and excitement.

I sat heroically with my heavy diadem on my head for two hours before and two hours after lunch, but the result is stupendous. I never in my life have seen a man to paint like that – it is almost witchcraft. Being hard up for time he did not lose any time in drawing in his picture first, he just painted it. The beauty of the colouring is marvellous and he seems to take hold of the best in the face and to bring it out with startling intensity...it's like a living presence in the room, add to the striking 'get up' we combined with our double good taste and you have really a great work of art before you...This portrait will be a recompense for the artistic torture endured by being so often painted by bunglers of all nationalities... he painted as one who had magic in his fingers, a human blessed by the gods when he laid down his brush and the picture was finished and it rose up before us all a living, pulsing, alive woman, in a gold dress and veil...We all shook hands and congratulated each other mutually, like after the birth of a child in whom many hopes concentrated.³

De László visited Bucharest in 1936 to fulfil a commission for the Queen's son King Carol II. He also painted her in mourning for her cousin King George V of Great Britain who had died on 20 January 1936. That portrait was hung in the Cerkez drawing room at the Cotroceni Palace opposite the present portrait: "...the expression is sad and thoughtful, and I have hung it opposite the brilliant Queen of ten years ago – all in gold, with the crown on my head, and the contrast tells its own tale."⁴

Princess Marie Alexandra Victoria was born on 3 October 1875 at Eastwell Park in Kent, the daughter of Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, second son of Queen Victoria, and Grand Duchess Marie, the daughter of Tsar Alexander II. She was brought up in England, Malta and Coburg. She was romantically involved with her first cousin George (later King George V of Great Britain) but their marriage was opposed by their mothers. In 1893, aged just seventeen, she married Prince Ferdinand of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Crown Prince of Romania, who inherited the throne from his uncle Carol I in 1914.

Provenance:

The sitter;
Muzeul Național Peleş, Sinaia, Romania

Exhibited:

- The French Gallery, London, *A Series of Portraits and Studies by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, June 1924, no. 13
- Hôtel Jean Charpentier, Paris, *Exhibition of One Hundred Years of French Life*, 1929, no. 845
- Peleş Castle, Sinaia, *Queen Marie and the Art Nouveau Style*, September–November 2000
- National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, *Cartier: The Exhibition*, 30 March–22 July 2018

Selected Bibliography:

- Queen Marie of Romania, *Diaries*, vol. III, 148 rola 148, pp. 99–100, 103–105, 148, vol. III, 195 rola 489, p. 80–81, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest
- Letters from Philip de László to Queen Marie of Romania, 1 and 12 March 1936, Personal Papers of Queen Marie of Romania, V4673 & V4674, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest
- Rutter 1939, pp. 175, 352–353, 376
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, pp. 31–33, figs. 21, 91
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, pp. 186–187
- Jean-Paul Cluzel, *Cartier: Style and History*, exh. cat., Réunion des Musées Nationaux-Grand Palais, Paris, 2013, p. 93, ill.
- Francois Chaille, *Cartier Royal: High Jewelry and Precious Objects*, Paris, 2014, p. 25, ill.
- Geoffrey Munn, *Wartski: The First One Hundred and Fifty Years*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2015, p. 182, ill.

¹ Queen Marie accompanied her husband King Ferdinand and, after completing her official duties, remained for a further two weeks at her leisure.

² The tiara had been purchased by the sitter from her aunt, Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna (1854–1920), who had fled Russia during the revolution. The sapphire pendant had been bought for her in 1921 by her husband and she wore both at his coronation in 1922.

³ Queen Marie of Romania, *Diaries*, op. cit.

⁴ Hector Bolitho, *A Biographer's Notebook*, London and New York, 1950, p. 45.

7
Princess Elisabeta of Romania, formerly Queen of Greece

1924

Oil on canvas, 90 x 74 cm (35 ½ x 29 ¼ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László / Paris 1924. IX.*

Private Collection

This portrait made a bold statement of royalty at an uncertain time for the Greek Royal Family. Queen Elisabeta and her husband King George II of Greece were forced into exile in December 1923 and a republic declared on 23 March 1924. They took refuge in London and stayed with King George V at Sandringham, then moved to Paris where this portrait was painted in September.¹ The portrait has only recently been traced after spending almost 100 years in an unknown private collection. De László painted the sitter's mother, Queen Marie of Romania [Cat. 6], just four months before in his London studio.

The emerald earrings worn by Queen Elisabeta form part of a diamond and emerald parure comprising a tiara, several pendants and a brooch. They were a wedding gift from Grand Duchess Alexandra Iosifovna of Russia to her daughter Grand Duchess Olga on her marriage to King George I of Greece in 1867 and remain part of the Greek Crown Jewels to this day. The sitter also wears a laurel crown, symbolic of Greece's ancient past and a political statement given the family's exile. Ties between the Greek and British Royal Families were very close. King George II's uncle, Prince Andrew, married Princess Alice of Battenberg [Cat 3] and their son Prince Philip married Princess Elizabeth of York, later Queen Elizabeth II [Cat. 5].

De László found himself with divided loyalties when painting the Romanian Royal Family during his 1936 visit to Bucharest. Princess Elisabeta wanted the artist to paint her lover Alexandru Scanavi to which he objected, being a friend of her then ex-husband, George II of Greece, whom he first painted in 1914. Queen Marie recorded the

anguish this caused de László in her diary: "...[he] hates to be shoved into a clandestine arrangement with Lisabetha [sic] to paint the portrait (and cheaply at that) of a man whom instinctively his [sic] disapproves of! In his despair he confessed the whole thing to me, wondering how he can get out of it without hurting Lisabeth's [sic] feeling. He was almost ill with perplexity."²

The artist lunched with the sitter towards the end of his visit to Bucharest: "I lunched [sic] with princess Elisabeth – I feared she may be unpleasant about not painting her friend but she was most pleasant charming & I must say beautiful – would love to do many studs of her...I feel sorry for this fine face – unfortunate lonely woman & we parted – a very friendly way."³

Princess Elisabeta's marriage was childless and was dissolved in 1935 as she had no intention of returning to Greece on the restoration of the monarchy. She chose instead to remain in Romania and the title of Princess of Romania was restored to her. She went into exile again when the pro-communist government forced the abdication of her nephew King Michael on 30 December 1947. She lived in Cannes until her death on 14 November 1956.

Provenance:

André Maurois;
 Private Collection

Selected Bibliography:

•F.L.L. [Ferdinand L. Leipnik], 'Art in the Making', *The Graphic*, 24 January 1925, p. 123, ill.

¹ DLA123-0196, letter from King George II of Greece to de László, 15 August 1924.

² Queen Marie of Romania, *Diaries*, vol. III 150, 10 February 1936, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest.

³ Philip de László, 1936 diary, 15 March entry.



THE GRAND MANNER

De László admired the long history of portrait painting in England, a genre which did not have the same status in his native Hungary. He hoped to find a place there where he could enjoy the warm welcome offered to foreign artists: "...here indeed I could make my life, in this home of the art to which I was devoted, and that I might perhaps aspire to become a link, however humble, in the great chain of foreign artists who had been received and treated by England as her own sons."¹

He first exhibited in England in 1904 on the invitation of Auguste Rodin, then President of the International Society of Art. He sent his widely admired portraits of Pope Leo XIII and Cardinal Rampolla, giving English society the opportunity to see his paintings at first hand.² This was followed by The Fine Art Society exhibition in 1907, which was publicised by an article in *The Studio* magazine in May written by his old friend Doctor Gábor de Térey, Chief Curator of Old Masters at the Hungarian National Gallery. The article linked him to the Grand Manner tradition in England:

The world in which our artist moves, the world where his work is lived and whence he draws his inspiration, is that of the upper ten thousand. It is a world which stands far apart from need and strife, where everything connected with beauty and luxury can develop unhindered. The women who belong to this sphere have, amidst other more important tasks, that of being beautiful and dressing beautifully. They are well aware of their external advantages and are fully conscious of every gesture they make, and yet they give the impression of perfectly natural ease. These are László's models, just as they were the favourite models of Vandyck, Reynolds and Gainsborough.³

The artist's rise to prominence was facilitated by the ease with which his portraits highlighted the elegance and grandeur of his sitters and complemented portraits of their ancestors in the great palaces and stately homes of Europe. William Cavendish-Bentinck, 6th Duke of Portland, one of his most important English patrons, created a "László room" at Welbeck Abbey [Cat. 30] to hang some of his nearly twenty commissions from the artist. De László's 1912 'Queen Mary's Pearls' portrait of the Duchess drew a delighted letter of thanks from the Duke:

Nobilissime, clarissime, amicissime Vir, The portrait of my dear wife which you have been so good as to frame for me is not only an exact reproduction of her beautiful self but it has also a ray of Heaven illuminating in her face the charming qualities of her soul. My ancestor the loyal Newcastle thought that the illustrious Vandyke's paintings were nature and not art, and words that were used for other famous portraits may justly I think be applied to this one of yours: "It has an air of nobility about it. A spirit of humanity within it." Truth held your pencil, genius guided it, and bowing a humble homage to art and genius, I am, Your assured admirer, Portland.⁴

No less important was the patronage of Charles Vane-Tempest-Stewart, 7th Marquess of Londonderry, for whom the artist painted sixteen portraits. His 1913 portrait of the Marquess' wife Edith, then Lady Castlereagh, is one of the artist's masterpieces and was commissioned to hang at Londonderry House in London amongst their renowned collection of works by Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830).

A preliminary oil sketch for Lady Castlereagh's portrait shows that de László originally envisaged his sitter in a white dress with elaborate hairstyle to echo Lawrence's portrait of Lady Amelia, wife of the 2nd Marquess of Londonderry, in their collection. The artist changed this concept at the request of the Londonderry family to a red velvet dress in order to reflect the sitter's admiration for Frances Anne Vane-Tempest, wife of the 3rd Marquess. Lawrence had painted her in a large full-length portrait with her son Lord Seaham. De László instead painted Lady Castlereagh with her favourite lurcher, Fly.



The 'pear pearl' necklace draped over the Duchess of Portland's right hand once belonged to Queen Mary II and was given to the 1st Earl of Portland by William III



The Viscountess Castlereagh, née the Honourable Edith Chaplin, 1913



Frances Vane-Tempest, wife of 3rd Marquess of Londonderry and her son George Henry Robert Charles William Vane-Tempest, Viscount Seaham by Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1828

She holds a cutting whip presented to Frances Anne by the Prince Regent, later George IV, on the occasion of her wedding on 3 April 1819. The picture and whip remain in the collection at Mount Stewart.

Many of the artist's clients were great collectors or had inherited an historic collection. Colonel Wilfred Ashley specifically commissioned de László to paint a portrait of his wife Muriel to hang at Broadlands alongside that of Lady Anne Culverdon by George Romney (1734–1802). Colonel Ashley's letter of thanks lists some of the finest English portrait painters and places de László's work in the same pantheon: "It will long be a cherished heirloom I trust, and it shows clearly that there is at least one artist of the twentieth century whose works can challenge the best productions of former times. The portraits by Van Dyck, Romney, Opie, Raeburn, Reynolds, Lely, Hoppner and Laurence [sic] in this house will welcome so distinguished an addition to their company."³

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a revived appreciation for painters of the 18th-century English School. In the art market, masterpieces by Reynolds, Gainsborough and Lawrence were bought for huge sums by American millionaires, often through the agency of Joseph Duveen who encouraged aristocratic English owners to part with their treasures. Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy*, his homage to Van Dyck, was sold to Henry Huntington in 1922 for the equivalent today of over £5 million, then a record price for any painting. De László's own tribute to Van Dyck in this exhibition is his portrait of Mrs George Sandys [Cat. 8].

Despite reduced demand for Grand Manner portraits as the 20th century progressed, de László's career proves there was still an appetite for his work in this style. Particularly surprising is the number of full-length and three-quarter length portraits he painted during the First World War and examples are included in this exhibition [Cat. 9] [Cat. 19]. Others from 1917 alone include: Evelyn Guinness, Lady Moyne, Lady Strang Steel and Mrs Oswald Sanderson. The latter composition is a direct reference to Reynolds' *Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse*, a tribute by de László as he sought to take his place in the long history of Grand Manner portrait painters in Britain.

¹ DLA128-0015, *Statement of Philip Alexius László de Lombos in the Matter of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914, 1919.*

² In 1900 *Pope Leo XIII* was exhibited to great acclaim at the Paris Salon, where it was awarded the Gold Medal.

³ Térey 1907, p. 256.

⁴ Rutter 1939, pp. 275–276. When visiting Welbeck in 1916 Lucy wrote of seeing this letter: "I was sent for by Philip to come to the Library to see the original letter wh: the Duke of Newcastle wrote to Van Dyke [sic] about his portrait – I had seen a photo of this letter before when the Duke wrote a similar one to Philip about the portrait of the Duchess – The Duke was there showing me the letter." Lucy de László, 1916 diary, 23 July entry.

⁵ Letter from Colonel Wilfred Ashley to de László, quoted in Rutter 1939, p. 390.

8

Mrs George Sandys, née Dulcie Redford

1916

Oil on canvas, 241.3 x 125.7 cm (95 x 49 ½ in.)

Inscribed upper left: *P. A. László / 1916*

Private Collection

This portrait of Mrs George Sandys is influenced by Van Dyck's portrait of Lucy Hay, Countess of Carlisle.¹ De László saw that portrait in 1911, while staying at Wentworth Woodhouse painting Countess Fitzwilliam and her family. This demonstrates how the artist's extraordinary visual memory influenced his compositions throughout his career. His portraits are rarely direct quotations but rather suggestions, though the reference to Van Dyck in Countess Fitzwilliam's portrait is more obvious since it depicts the sitter in front of the portrait of her ancestor Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl Stafford. Such works exemplify de László's artistic lineage as a successor in the Grand Manner style to portraitists such as Van Dyck, Gainsborough, Reynolds and Lawrence.

De László was privileged to view masterpieces by these artists in private collections throughout Europe while staying with his aristocratic sitters. The *Equestrian Portrait of Charles I* in the National Gallery in London made an important impact on the artist during his first visit to the city in 1898. The following year he travelled to Antwerp to see the Van Dyck exhibition at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts. Throughout his life he sought out great works of art in order to learn from the masters he admired. Such was the case in 1933 when he sought help from Marchesa Marconi: "It is most kind of you to write to Genoa in regard to my visits to a few of the Palaces to see the Vandyck portraits, and I hope especially to be able to see the Balbi and Doria galleries."²

Although Britain was entering the second year of the First World War when Mrs Sandys was painted, there was no shortage of demand for portraits. In 1916 de László painted six full-length or nearly full-length portraits in the Grand Manner style as well as portraits of many soldiers in khaki. The Duchess of Northumberland invited the artist to view a print of another Van Dyck portrait of the Countess of Carlisle as inspiration for her own full-length portrait now at Alnwick Castle.³ At this date de László was charging an honorarium of about £1000 for a portrait of this size, a significant sum in times of war when a trooper of the 4th Cavalry Brigade fighting in France was earning the equivalent of £5 a day.⁴

Dulcie Edythe Angela Redford was born on 13 December 1893 in Ayr, Scotland, the daughter of Sir Edward Redford and his wife Florence Buckton from Leeds. She was known as one of the 'Three Belles' of Edinburgh and on 22 April 1914 married George Owen Sandys (1884–1973) at St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh. They lived between Greythwaite Hall, Lancashire, and Grosvenor Street in London where she preferred the society of town life. Mrs Sandys died aged seventy-nine on 1 May 1973, just six weeks after her husband.

Exhibited:

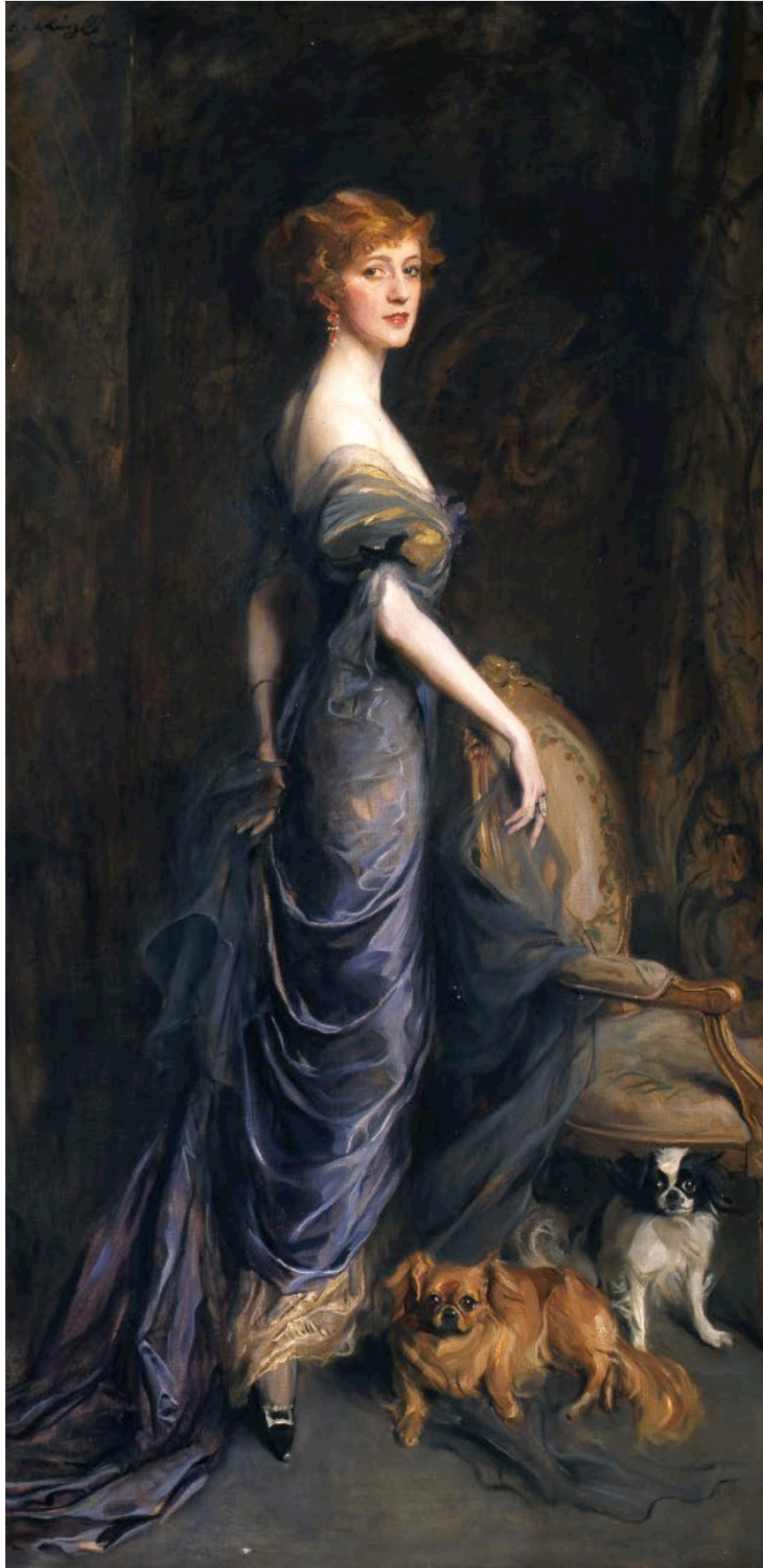
- Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 64
- Tate Britain, London, *Van Dyck and Britain*, 18 February–17 May 2009, no. 133

¹ 1637, The Trustees of the Rt Hon Olive Countess of Fitzwilliam's Chattels settlement.

² DLA076-0008, letter from de László to Marchesa Marconi, 20 February 1933.

³ Original at Petworth (NT 485068); see DLA081-0010 letter from Helen Percy, Duchess of Northumberland to de László, undated but c. 1916.

⁴ British Army rates of pay 1914 as defined by War Office Instruction 166 (1914).





9
*Mrs Archie
Graham,
née Dorothy
Shuttleworth*

1917
Oil on canvas,
170.8 x 102.2 cm
(67 ¼ x 40 ¼ in.)

Inscribed upper left:
P A de László / 1917

Private Collection

The present portrait is in an overtly Grand Manner style and heavily reminiscent of English and French portraits by artists like Gainsborough, Watteau and Fragonard. De László chose a palette very similar to Gainsborough's portrait of Countess Howe, which he would have known in the collection of his wife Lucy's cousin, Edward Guinness, 1st Earl of Iveagh, at Kenwood House. The salmon pink shimmers with an overlay of silver and gold thread, accentuated by a pearl necklace and diamond brooch.

It was painted in the artist's studio at West House on Campden Hill, a short walk from his home at 3 Palace Gate near Kensington Palace. From 1909 to 1921 de László walked twice a day across Kensington Gardens to the studio before returning home for lunch. Mrs Archie Graham was a near neighbour of the artist and her home in De Vere Gardens almost backed onto his garden.

De László designed the dress for Mrs Graham and chose the colour of the silk, which was characteristic of the artist. There is detailed correspondence about this practice relating to a later portrait of Lady Buchanan-Jardine. The artist wrote to the sitter in February 1928, enclosing a reproduction of a work by Botticelli whose colour scheme had inspired him. He provided a drawing laying out his vision for the portrait:

I...would prefer the blue which I think would suit you very well – very pale, nattier blue chiffon – not exactly cut as it is here on the picture, but as you will see it on my drawing. The dress is really in one with a girdle, which will help to show your figure, and the sleeves, as you see, not closed as on the picture, but as you see it on my drawing – open sleeves. I think if you get the right green blue chiffon and a little silver for the girdle, it would look very attractive, and we could put some kind of silver decoration on your hair, something similar to what you see on the picture. May I ask you to let me have various patterns of pale bluish chiffon that I could choose from and you could have the dress made. It is really very simple and I hope it will appeal to you. Let me know what you think about it. I am sure you will look better in it than the yellowish colour which would be too much similar to your hair, and, as I mentioned to you when you visited me, the branch of white flowers would go very well with the bluish tone and with your fair hair.¹

Once the artist and sitter had agreed on the design, the dress was made by a dressmaker. One has not been identified for the present portrait but Lady Buchanan-Jardine used B. J. Simmons & Co., a well-known costumier in Covent Garden. The dress for Mrs Archie Graham cost £50, which deeply shocked the sitter's mother-in-law when she received the bill at Airthrey Castle, the family home near



Untraced portrait of Lady Buchanan-Jardine, née Jean Barbara Hamilton
1928

Stirling. They were leading a parsimonious existence at that time as eight of her sons were fighting in the First World War and the cost of food was increasing dramatically.²

Exhibited:

•Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 71

Selected Bibliography:

•de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 139, ill.

¹ DLA058-0092, letter from de László to Lady Buchanan-Jardine, 20 February 1928.

² As told to Sandra de Laszlo by a daughter of the sitter in 1997. The government implemented rationing in 1918 but supplies were already reduced in 1917.

10

Anne Mabel Olivia Trouton

1910

Oil on board, 91 x 70 cm (35 7/8 x 27 3/8 in.)

Inscribed lower left: *P.A. László 1910. V. / London*

Private Collection

De László's wife Lucy recalled that this portrait was finished on 4 June 1910 and the artist remarked: "This is one of the best things I've done."¹ De László maintained this opinion for the rest of his life and included the portrait in his final exhibition at Wildenstein & Co., London, which opened on 23 November 1937, two days after his death.

De László was especially creative in his compositions for portraits of children. His early biographer Otto Von Schleinitz wrote: "...it is in this very branch of art that the Master always has something new to say, and we also see the way in which he loves children and can empathize with them and understand them, and thus express their feelings."² This portrait is reminiscent of English 18th-century children's portraiture which emphasised the sitter's innocence and childish grace. George Romney's portrait of Marianne Holbech clutching her dog in her lap is a particularly close comparison.³

The artist's archive contains notes in an unidentified hand prepared for a review of the portrait when it was exhibited at Tho. Agnew & Sons in 1911 in aid of the Artists' General Benevolent Institution: "And now, for last; a masterpiece: Miss Olive Trouton. Few canvases have such a seduction as this which in grace and exquisite elegance recalls the great English Masters of the eighteenth century. This little clever and intelligent face under the picturesque old fashioned hat is what [sic] most delicious one can imagine so much that I think P. László never understood better up to now the childish soul."⁴

Lucy de László was a Guinness cousin of Professor Frederick Trouton, the sitter's father, and the families became very close after the de Lászlós moved to England in 1907. They had houses close to each other in Tilford, Surrey, and the children spent much time playing together. De László painted or drew many members of the Trouton family between 1908 and 1915. Four of these were done in 1915 and show the sitters in uniform, including Olive's three eldest

brothers. Frederick and Desmond were both killed fighting in the First World War and Maurice was the victim of a V2 rocket that destroyed his home in London during the Second World War.

Anne Mabel Olivia 'Olive' Trouton was born in Dublin on 27 November 1900. She trained as an architect and on 18 May 1929 married fellow architect, Adrian Albert van Montagu (1901–1994). They collaborated with Barbara Acworth, designing domestic architecture and public houses for the Taylor Walker brewing company. Olive also designed for friends and family, including Henry de Laszlo, the artist's eldest son, to whom she was especially close.

Provenance:

By descent in the family;

Sold at Christie's, London, 12 December 2019, lot 165

Exhibited:

- Thos. Agnew & Sons Ltd., London, *Exhibition of Portraits by Philip A. Laszlo*, May–June 1911, no. 2
- Wildenstein & Co., Ltd., London, *Exhibition of Paintings by Philip A. de László*, M.V.O., 24 November–22 December 1937, no. 34
- Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 47

Selected Bibliography:

- The Illustrated London News*, New York Edition, Summer Number, 17 June 1911, p. 907, ill.
- Baldry 1911, p. 262, ill.
- Schleinitz 1913, p. 118, ill., pl. 132
- Baldry 1938, p. 85

¹ Lucy de László, 1902–1911 diary, 4 June 1910 entry.

² Schleinitz 1913, pp. 117–118.

³ 1781–82, Philadelphia Museum of Art, E1924-4-25.4

⁴ DLA091-0288, Review of Tho. Agnew & Sons exhibition by an unknown hand, 1911. The original has some illegible words and has been corrected in this instance for clarity.



11

Violet Bathurst, Lady Apsley, née Violet Meeking

1926

Oil on canvas, 128.3 x 86.4 cm (50 ½ x 34 in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László / 1926*

Private Collection

Fox hunting before the First World War was a sport in which men and women rode alongside each other as equals. This led Edith Somerville, writer and accomplished horsewoman, to conclude: “The playing-fields of Eton did not as surely win Waterloo as the hunting-fields... won the vote for women.”¹ Exceptional horsewomen demonstrated courage and bravery in the field, aided by technical advancements in the design of the side-saddle and a new style of safety skirt that prevented them from being dragged if they fell. Lady Apsley was among these ‘Dianas of the Chase’ and de László depicted her heroically posed against a landscape in hunting dress.

She is wearing a ‘Busvine,’ a ladies side-saddle riding habit named for J. Busvine & Co. of 4 Brook Street in London, the premier tailors of hunting dress. Grey was normally worn for autumn hunting. Sir Alfred Munnings recorded Princess Mary in a similar habit riding her grey mare Portumna, which was presented to her by the hunting ladies of Ireland on her marriage to Henry Lascelles, 6th Earl of Harewood.

Lady Apsley’s portrait was commissioned by Herbert Johnson, her step-father, as a pendant to that of her sister Lady Somers for his home Marsh Court in Hampshire. In an earlier portrait, Lady Bathurst, the sitter’s mother-in-law, insisted de László paint Lady Apsley in a green evening dress, writing “a habit is such an ugly thing stiff and black and unwomanly.”² She was, however, thrilled by the present portrait and wrote to the artist’s wife Lucy: “Do tell Mr. de László that I have seen the two pictures of my daughter in law & Finola Somers, in grey habits, hanging at Marsh Court & I like them immensely.”³

Violet ‘Viola’ Meeking was born on 29 April 1895, the eldest daughter of Lieutenant Bertram Charles Meeking and his wife Violet Fletcher of Richings Park, Buckinghamshire. Her father served with the 10th Royal Hussars and died of typhoid during the Second Boer War. In 1912 her mother married Herbert Johnson of Marsh Court,

Hampshire, who took great care of his two step-daughters. During the First World War, he converted Marsh Court into a Military Hospital where Violet served with a Voluntary Aid Detachment. On 27 February 1924 she married Allen Algernon Bathurst, Lord Apsley, eldest son of the 7th Earl Bathurst and the Hon. Lilius Borthwick.

In 1930 Lady Apsley broke her back in a hunting accident while out with the Vale of White Horse hounds and was confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. Her condition did not affect her strength of character nor her determination. Lady Apsley served as Group Commander of the Auxiliary Territorial Service and National Chair of the British Legion. Her husband was killed on active service in Malta in 1942. She contested and won his seat as Conservative MP for Bristol Central in a 1943 by-election, which she held until the 1945 Labour ‘landslide.’

Though her accident prevented her from riding again, she published several books on the subject: *To Whom the Goddess* (1932, co-authored with Lady Diana Shedden), *Bridleways through History* (1936), and *The Fox-Hunter’s Bedside Book* (1949). She was awarded a CBE in 1952 for public and social services.

Provenance:

Herbert Johnson, the sitter’s step-father;
By descent

Exhibited:

- The French Gallery, London, *A Series of Portraits and Studies by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, June 1927, no. 32
- Christie’s, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 104

Selected Bibliography:

- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 169, ill.

¹ Edith Somerville and Martin Ross, *Stray-Aways*, London, 1920, p. 230.

² DLA055-0075, letter from Lady Bathurst to de László, 6 March 1924.

³ DLA055-0088, letter from Lady Bathurst to Lucy de László, 3 January 1927.



12

Captain Richard Charles Geers Cotterell

1931

Oil on canvas, 100.4 x 75 cm (39 ½ x 29 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László 1931*

Private Collection

De László has skillfully rendered the sitter's state uniform in this portrait, particularly the metallic gleam of the helmet and cuirass of the ceremonial uniform of the Royal Horse Guards (Blues and Royals). The Life Guards and Blues and Royals are the two regiments that make up the Household Cavalry and are considered the most prestigious in the British Army due to their role as the monarch's official bodyguard. They escort the sovereign on State occasions like the State Opening of Parliament and Trooping the Colour. Historically, the officers were drawn exclusively from the British aristocracy.

This is one of three portraits de László painted of officers of the Household Cavalry. Prince Adolphus, Duke of Cambridge, was painted in 1906 as Commanding Officer of the 1st Life Guards. In 1914 the eldest son of the 6th Duke of Portland, Arthur Cavendish-Bentinck, Marquess of Titchfield, was painted in the same uniform as the present picture to celebrate his coming of age. Titchfield's portrait was delayed by the First World War and completed soon after the artist's release from internment in the summer of 1919.

Cotterell sat sporadically from July to September 1931 and this portrait was completed on 23 September. The artist noted in his diary: "I finished with the portrait of young Cotterell[] which gives me much pleasure. The Horse guard uniform – with the helmet – gave me the opportunity of an amusing treatment [sic] – all this trim[m]ing can be very dull – but it depends how it is rendered!"

Richard Charles Geers Cotterell (1907–1978) was the only son of Sir John Richard Cotterell (1866–1937) and his wife Lady Evelyn Gordon-Lennox (1872–1922). He had a distinguished military career. During the Second World War he commanded the 76th Shropshire Yeomanry Medium Regiment in the Middle East and Italy and was mentioned in despatches. After the Second World War Cotterell was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Artillery Shropshire Yeomanry, Territorial Army. He also served as a Justice of the Peace for the county of Hereford, Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire (1945–1957), and was created a Knight of the Order of St John.

1 Philip de László, 1931 diary, 23 September entry.





13
*Doctor Cosmo Gordon
 Lang, Archbishop of
 Canterbury*

1937

Oil on canvas, 153 x 110.5
 cm (60 ¼ x 43 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower right:
de László / July 1937

The Archbishop of
 Canterbury and the
 Church Commissioners,
 Lambeth Palace, London

By Kind Permission of
 the Lord Archbishop of
 Canterbury and the Church
 Commissioners for England

This is one of de László's final portraits in the Grand Manner style and shows no diminution in skill despite being painted in the last months of his life. Just eight weeks before his death he wrote: "I feel that this portrait will always count amongst my outstanding works." Of the some forty-five ecclesiastical portraits he painted during his fifty-year career, this is one of his finest. The best known of these is his 1900 portrait of Pope Leo XIII, which won him the Gold Medal at the Paris Salon and cemented his reputation as one of Europe's leading portrait painters.²

The artist saw this commission as an important historical record of the man who officiated the Coronation of George VI on 12 May 1937 which would hang at Lambeth among portraits of Archbishops of the previous five centuries. In a letter to Baron Frederik Wedel Jarlsberg he wrote: "I think I have to a certain extent succeeded in what I endeavoured to do, to depict his intellectual strength, and the impress of the difficulties with which he was concerned before the Coronation and the great responsibilities he carried during the Coronation, and I also tried not only to paint a portrait, but to convey the atmosphere of his high office."³

De László hoped to attend the Coronation but his health had not recovered following a serious heart attack the previous autumn. Despite spending several months in the warm climate of Cap Ferrat over the winter of 1936, he had not returned to full strength and was only painting for a few hours each morning. This forced him to refuse the invitation: “We kept very quiet during the Coronation festivities. I could have been in Westminster Abbey, but I refused, as I would have been obliged to climb up steps to my seat, and felt it would have been too long a strain. But we had the privilege of seeing the final rehearsal, which was very lovely, and gave one a good idea of the actual ceremony.”⁴

Reverend Alan Don, Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, arranged the commission and de László met Lang at Lambeth Palace on 6 July 1936. The Archbishop was anxious to be painted again as he was deeply unhappy with the efforts of Sir William Llewellyn, President of the Royal Academy.⁵ De László recorded the meeting in his diary:

With the Archbishop we retired & he began about the portrait I am to paint of him. Since I last saw him he has much changed himself & changed in spirit towards me – He expressed gratitude that I accepted to paint him again – complaint of Llewellyn the R.A. how he gave him a large amount of sittings etc & the portrait has to be placed at the palace – but will not allow to be the officiell [sic] portrait of his!...the Arch: consented to come here for the sittings & will give me the opportunity to my hearts desire to sit as I suggested in white & gold as he will be at the forthcoming occasion of the Coronation with the Episcopal attributes of the Ancient Pastoral staff & mitre like his predecessors portrait by Holbein.⁶

Archbishop Lang (1864–1945) was the first Church of England Archbishop to wear a mitre since the Reformation. His Anglo-Catholic views and association of the mitre with Catholic symbolism gave its presence in the portrait particular significance. In his account of the 1937 Coronation Lang wrote: “I had decided not to raise the question of wearing a mitre. True of course I had naturally

worn a mitre at York, in London and at Canterbury, the first Archbishop either of York or Canterbury who had done so since the Reformation. True also that by George V’s somewhat reluctant permission I had worn it at the great state service at St Paul’s on the day of his silver jubilee. But on this special day when it was necessary to keep to the precedent of certainly three hundred years I decided rightly or wrongly not to introduce an innovation. I am rather sorry but so it was.”⁷

This is one of three portraits de László painted of Cosmo Gordon Lang. While unveiling the first in 1932, Archbishop Lang was reported as saying, “the Church House was becoming a de László gallery, and he only wished that the premises were more worthy of the pictures.”⁸

As testament to the artist’s achievement it was fitting that on 26 November 1937 Lang presided over de László’s funeral service at St Margaret’s, Westminster, the 12th-century church next to Westminster Abbey. In his eulogy he offered a personal and heartfelt tribute to the man he knew so well:

We shall all remember his eager and ardent spirit, the warmth and generosity of his friendship, the width of his sympathy which enabled him to portray with skill and understanding men and women of every race and country, his love of beauty and his lifelong devotion to his art as the service he rendered to the cause of beauty. We shall remember the simplicity and integrity of his character, the love with which he filled his home life, his high ideals of art and of life.⁹

Exhibited:

•Wildenstein & Co., Ltd., London, *Exhibition of Paintings by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 24 November–22 December 1937, no. 11

Selected Bibliography:

- Rutter 1939, pp. 373, 378
- Hart–Davis & Corbeau–Parsons 2010, pp. 243, 273, ill. 143
- Hart–Davis & Somfalvi 2019, ill. 177

1 DLA025-0122, letter from de László to Alfred Stephen, 22 September 1937.

2 Magyar Nemzeti Galéria (Hungarian National Gallery), Inv. 3206.

3 DLA025-0129, letter from de László to Baron Frederik Wedel Jarlsberg, 6 September 1937.

4 DLA024-0317, letter from de László to Vilmos Ruttka de Ruttka, 29 May 1937.

5 Sir Samuel William Llewellyn (1858–1941), his portrait of Lang is in the collection of Lambeth Palace (Acc. no. 6).

6 William Warham (c. 1450–1532), Archbishop of Canterbury. His portrait after Holbein is in the collection of Lambeth Palace (Acc. no. 53). Philip de László, March–July 1936 diary, 6 July entry.

7 John G. Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang*, London, 1949, p. 418.

8 ‘Archbishop of Canterbury. Portrait at Church House. The Primate’s Task’, *The Times*, 30 November 1932, p.

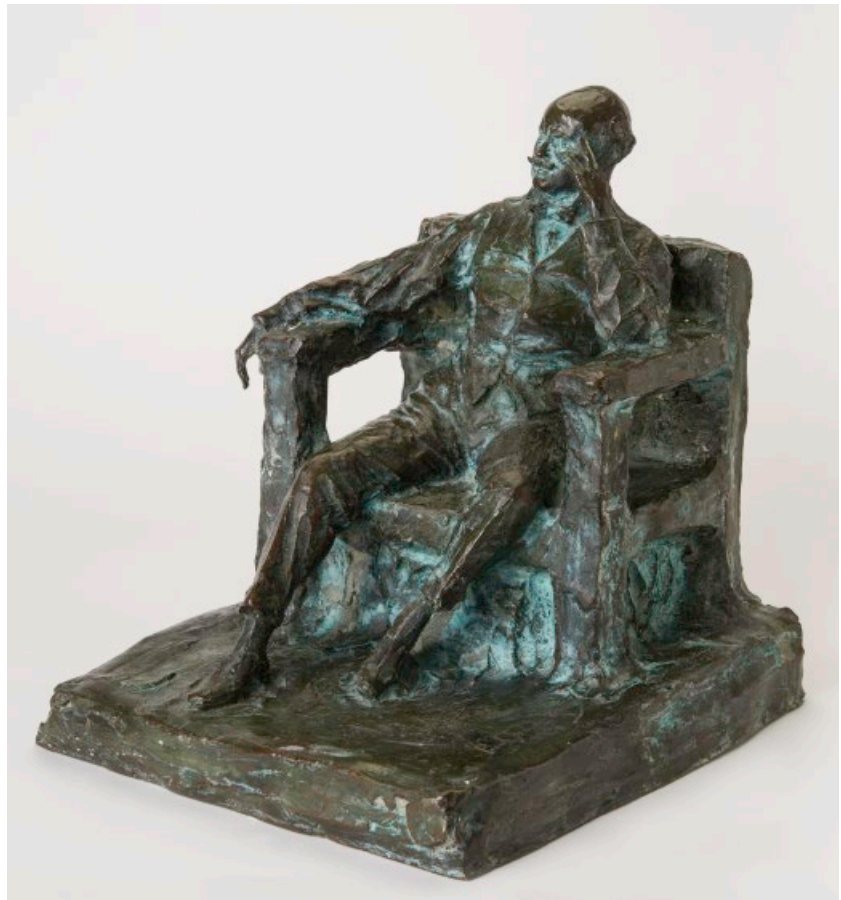
9 DLA[unindexed], Service sheet for de László’s funeral service on 26 November 1937.

THE CREATIVE FORCE

De László was fascinated by the creative force in others and made many friends among his sitters in the arts and sciences. Their intelligence, thirst for knowledge and continual pursuit of excellence mirrored his own and he could relate to these individuals “who have devoted lives to the mastery of their particular subjects.”¹ Like his eighteenth-century English predecessors, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough, de László also understood the power and draw of celebrity. All three artists painted men and women “of genius and merit” who were public figures and captured society’s attention.² De László’s psychological approach to portraiture made academic sitters particularly fascinating to him as he strove to capture their genius on canvas.

These portraits were often painted as part of an artistic exchange between the painter and another artist as was the case with Francis Adam’s portrait in this exhibition [Cat. 15]. In 1931 de László met the aristocratic sculptor Prince Paul Troubetzkoy in Paris and they exchanged portraits of each other. Though working in different media, the two artists adopted an immediacy and fluidity in their technique. Troubetzkoy’s bronze statuette of de László shows the artist seated, a composition he specialised in, and pointing to his temple in a gesture of inspiration. It might have been inspired by Reynolds’ portrait of the author Laurence Sterne.³ The portrait and sculpture were shown together at the Colnaghi Gallery in London in 1931.

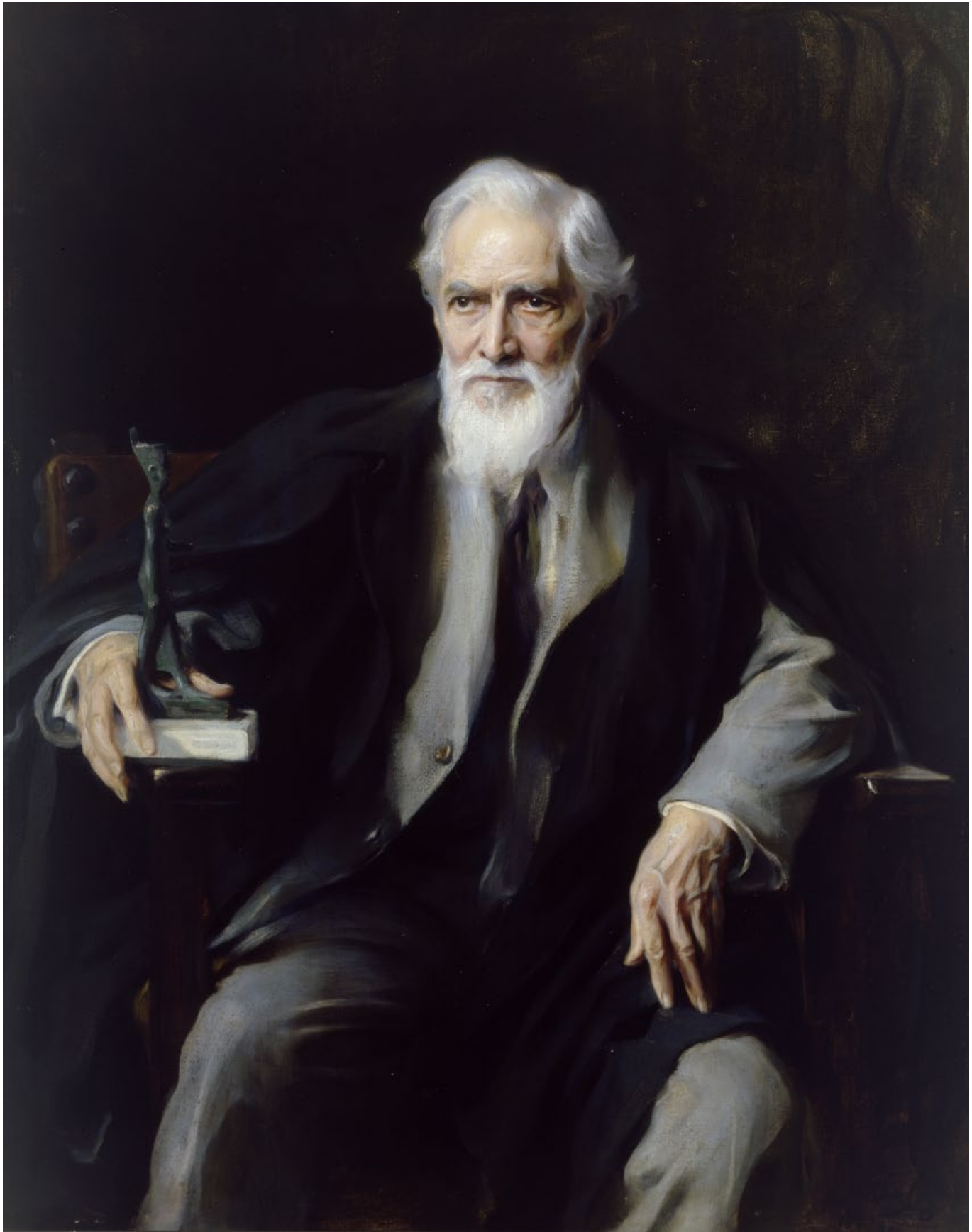
De László contributed to numerous charitable causes and events throughout his career and on several occasions his models were well-known actresses. In 1916 de László painted Julia James for the benefit of St Dunstan’s Charity for blind servicemen. The portrait was



Sculpture of Philip Alexius de László
by Prince Paul Troubetzkoy, 1931

Doctor Helen Gwynne-Vaughan was painted in 1909, the year she was appointed Head of the Botany Department at Birkbeck College, London.





Eminent Egyptologist Professor Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie, 1934

auctioned at the Savoy Fair in summer 1917 and purchased by a friend of the actress for £100. De László also painted Gladys Cooper, Julia's contemporary, in 1916 to benefit the Royal Star & Garter charity. At the time she was starring in James Barrie's *The Admiral Crichton* and the portrait was sold to benefit the war effort on 24 July 1916 at the Cecil Hotel in London. The purchaser was Sir Charles Russell [Cat. 29] who was later to play such an important role in the artist's life as his lawyer during the Naturalisation Revocation Committee Trial in 1919. Lucy de László records in her diary that Russell subsequently sold the portrait for £500 in aid of the British Red Cross and it was then taken to India and auctioned again for the same charity for £1000.

Portraits of pioneering female academics constitute a fascinating group in this genre of the artist's portraits, and it is disappointing that none were available for loan to this exhibition. Admiring and sympathising with their struggle for recognition, de László painted these female sitters in heroic poses as figures of creative and intellectual power. Dame Emily Penrose was the first female to win a First in Greats (Classics) at Somerville College, Oxford, but women were not permitted to be awarded a degree from the University of Oxford at that time. She became principal of Royal Holloway College, one of the first institutions offering women a university-level education in Britain. Elizabeth Maude Guinness was an early student there and joined the academic staff as Librarian, Tutor and Lecturer in English.

Perhaps the artist's most successful portrait in that genre is that of Doctor Helen Fraser, later Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan. It was exhibited at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool in 1910:

The pose is striking. Helen sits, a book clasped against her knee, leaning slightly forward like one of Michelangelo's Sybils. Around and behind her swirl the masses of drapery, the scarlet and gold gleaming in the chiaroscuro. The face stares out with brilliant impassivity, the faintest shadow of impatience furrowing the brow. The eyes, which were de László's speciality as a painter, are luminously alive, and in the grave intelligence of their gaze one catches the effect of her personality. It is a goddess who looks out of those untroubled eyes, gazing out of the canvas with superb indifference, visionary in their remoteness. This is no Diana compounded of ice and fire, no Venus dimpling beside her mirror, but the goddess of learning, the cold ardour of the mind effacing a form opulent and feminine in its intent.⁴

De László's work was widely disseminated via print and photogravure reproductions and his archive contains thousands of newspaper and magazine articles amassed with the help of press cutting services from all over the world. Some were pasted into albums by the artist with official press photographs of him painting, posing with sitters and attending official presentations of portraits to institutions like the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The cuttings evidence the vast amount of publicity that kept the artist and his work in the public eye, thereby increasing his own celebrity and that of his sitters throughout his career. Many articles reviewed the exhibitions that de László relied on to bring his portraits to the attention of a wider public both across Europe and in America. Between 1889 and 1937 he sent pictures to approximately six hundred venues.

Of some 110 portraits of academics the artist painted, one exceptional sitter eluded him. In 1932 de László hoped to paint the Nobel Prize-winning theoretical physicist Albert Einstein. Professor George Nuttall, the artist's friend, tried to facilitate this but with little success:

As to Einstein ... it may not be plain sailing & I will tell you exactly what Ramsey told me so that you may not be too sanguine as to a successful outcome. Einstein is apparently a very erratic genius. Eddington said he could not help because one never knows what Einstein may do. As an example he wrote to Ramsey that he (Eddington) had two invitations to meet Einstein at dinner, the one in London, the other in Manchester, on the same day and hour (Do not laugh too loudly when you read this, and keep it private my friend!). Such are the ways of GENIUS. If we catch him for you, Ramsey and I will have to hold on to his coat tails and back hair or hire a lion tamer.⁵

The artist and scientist met in December 1933 at a Nobel Prize winners' dinner in New York and discussed the proposed portrait as de László described in his diary: "Prof. Einstein – had a good talk – a most subtle face with a fine expression something of an innocent child. I talked over with him the portrait of him which I was suggested to paint for Oxford – Christ Church College...invited me to paint him in his laboratory – which I will do & much look forward to it to paint his very exceptionally fine h[e]ad of a thinker – after my so – many banal heads – I have to do."⁶ Though sittings with Einstein failed to materialise, the artist painted the equally inspirational head of renowned Egyptologist Sir Flinders Petrie in 1934.

1 DLA113-0003, Philip de László, 'Painting a King', *The Evening News*, undated.

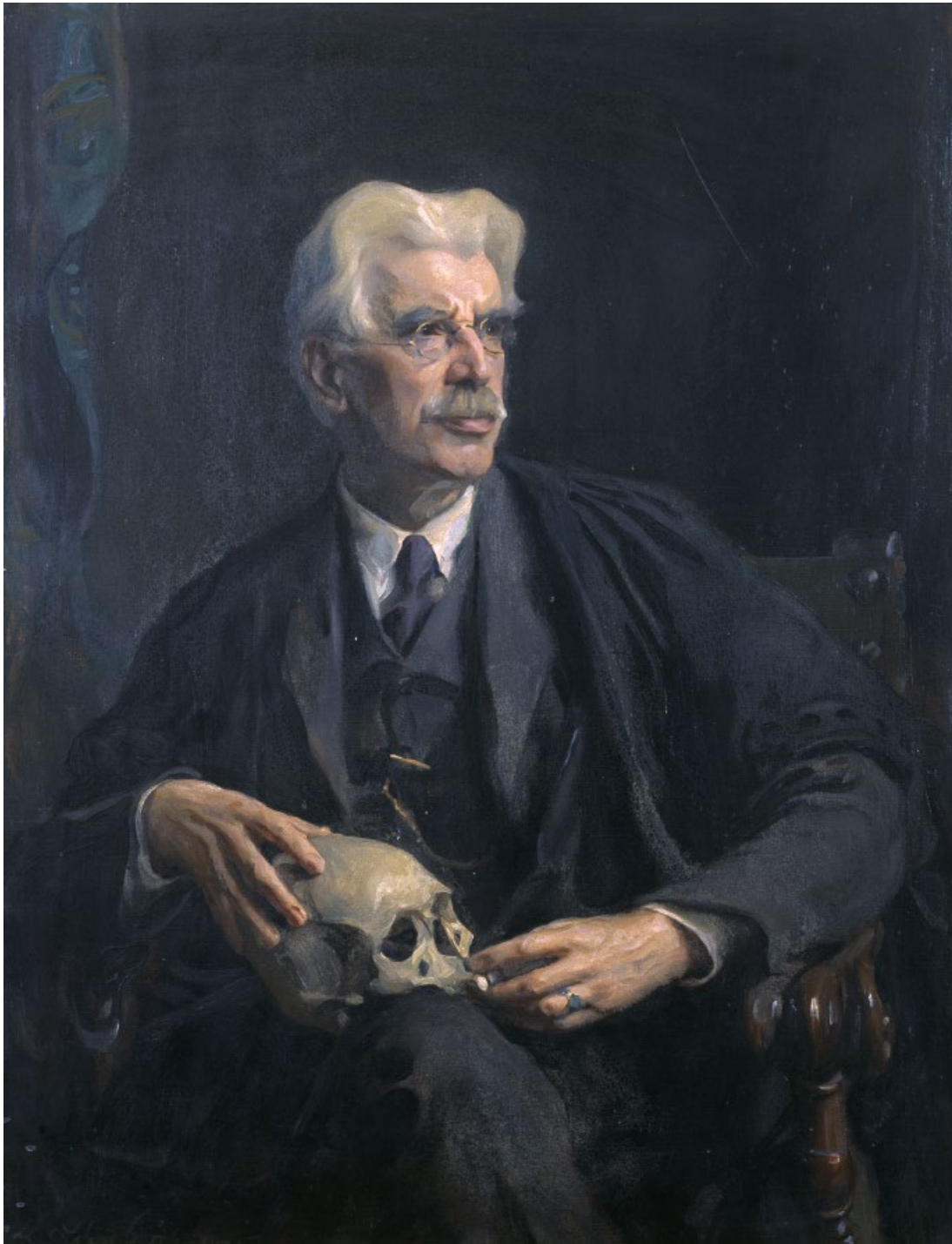
2 *Bath Journal*, 11 August 1788, p. 3.

3 Laurence Sterne, 1760, National Portrait Gallery, London.

4 Molly Izzard, *A Heroine in her Time: A Life of Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan 1897–1967*, London, 1969, pp. 101–102.

5 DLA118-0178, letter from Professor George Nuttall to de László, 20 May 1932.

6 Philip de László, 1933 diary, 18 December entry.



14

Doctor Alfred Cort Haddon

1925

Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 85.8 cm (43 ½ x 33 ¾ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László. 1925.*

Haddon Library, University of Cambridge

De László painted Dr Alfred Cort Haddon (1855–1940) in the style of a *vanitas*, which shows the transient nature of life and certainty of death and was a genre popular with painters of the Dutch Golden Age like Frans Hals and Jan Lievens. Here the symbolism is reflected in the skull, which also indicates Haddon's position as an eminent anthropologist.

The artist mentioned the portrait in an article for *The Evening News*:

Dr Haddon, the ethnologist – whose personality greatly inspired me – holds in his hands in the picture a very rare skull, and it delighted me to see the intensity of interest with which he appreciated it and to see the respect with which he handled it. When he began to talk of his experiences amongst the native of New Guineas and of his other distant travels, he became full of enthusiasm over the ancient people and their customs; and then I saw the real man – the genuine enthusiastic student! He has, besides, an extraordinarily picturesque head, with white hair and dark, penetrating eyes.'

De László presented the portrait to the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in 1925. He offered it to the museum following the commission of another portrait of Dr Haddon by friends and pupils for Christ's College, Cambridge, on the occasion of the sitter's seventieth birthday and his retirement from the post of Reader in Anthropology and Ethnology, which he had held for twenty-five years.² Haddon insisted his wife and daughters join him in the dining hall at Christ's College for the presentation on 23 May 1925 and, according to the Royal Society's obituary of Haddon, this "was the first occasion on which women dined in the College Hall, a highly suitable acknowledgement of Haddon's long efforts to secure that scientific consideration should not be limited by sex classification."³ De László painted another portrait of Haddon the same year which he gave to the sitter's family. This was characteristic of the artist for sitters he particularly admired.

Born in London in 1855, much of Haddon's education and career were tied to the University of Cambridge. He entered Christ's College in 1875 where he obtained a first class degree in comparative anatomy. He was awarded a grant to work for six months at the Stazione Zoologica in Naples, after which he was appointed Curator of the Zoological Museum at Cambridge. In 1880 he was appointed Professor of Zoology at the Royal College of Science and Assistant Naturalist to the Science and Art Museum in Dublin (now the

National Museum of Ireland). There he engaged in pioneering work in the scientific classification of sea anemones and developed an ethnographical interest in Irish life.

Between 1888 and 1889 he made zoological and ethnographical investigations in the Torres Straits. Later in 1898–99 he organised and conducted a Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits, New Guinea and Sarawak. From 1900 he was University Lecturer and later Reader in Ethnology at Cambridge until 1926.

He was widely published throughout his career; the bibliography of his writings and papers exceeds 200 entries, not including numerous book reviews. Haddon's photographic archive is held by Cambridge University's Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology and his papers are included in the university's Special Collections. He died aged eighty-five on 28 April 1940 in Cambridge.

Provenance:

Presented by de László to the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, 1925

Exhibited:

- Doll & Richards Galleries, Boston, *Portraits by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 1–10 October 1925, no. 11
- M. Knoedler & Co., New York, *Portraits by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 19–31 October 1925, no. 10
- The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., *Special Exhibition of Portraits by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 5–27 December 1925, no. 14
- Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, *Special Exhibition of Portraits by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 31 December 1925–10 January 1926, no. 14
- The French Gallery, London, *A Series of Portraits and Studies by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, June 1927
- Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, *Autumn Exhibition*, 1927, no. 940
- Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 100

Selected Bibliography:

- Rutter 1939, p. 359
- A. Hingston Quiggin, *Haddon the Head-Hunter*, Cambridge, 1942, pp. 144, 146
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 165, ill.
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 233

¹ DLA113-0003, Philip de László, 'Painting a King', *The Evening News*, undated.

² *Christ's College Magazine*, vol. XXXIV, no. 108, Lent term 1926, p. 185.

³ *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol. 3, no. 9, January 1941, p. 460.



15
Francis Adam

1935

Oil on canvas, 81.3 x 66 cm (32 x 26 in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László / 1935*

Private Collection

Francis Adam (1879–1961) was a leading silversmith and metalworker whom de László commissioned to make a number of items for his family: a fire screen, a candlestick and seven keys bearing the artist's coat of arms.¹ A letter from de László to Adam on 23 January 1935 shows the portrait was one half of an artistic exchange between two masters who admired each other's work: "I feel rather under an obligation to you for the seven keys you so kindly made for me, and would be so glad if you would let me know what I owe you for them, or if you would prefer it, I would paint a portrait sketch of you when I return. I am sure Mrs Adam and your family would like to possess it, and I would like to give you that pleasure."²

Adam visited the artist's studio on 25 May 1935 and de László painted him at work holding his hammer and a silver cup. De László noted in his diary that "His fine h[e]ad inspired me to paint him – with great simplicity alike France Halz [Franz Hals]."³ The experience overwhelmed the silversmith who wrote:

To my dear Mr de László, words fail me to express my feelings of the memorable day when I had the honour to be your guest – in more than one sense. My portrait – The Portrait of me – your generous gift to me, painted by you with such consummate skill, it is a wonderful masterpiece – to me a treasured joy for ever and I hope to my children...From my early childhood my life has been spent working. At the age of 12 my apprenticeship as a worker in metals began at the Anvil, with hammer, hence it was my desire to be portrayed working – your masterful conception – "the attitude of listening" – is inspired – like a monument to me. The emblems of my craft: Anvil, Hammer, Pen (Quill) are of great significance to me – by and with them, by the sweat of my brow, I have laboured for my living and to provide for my family.⁴

Like de László, Francis Adam was born in Hungary and studied in Vienna and Paris before moving to London. He became a British citizen in 1931 and anglicised his name from Ádám Ferenc. He was one of the first students of the London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts at Morley Hall in Lambeth. His notable commissions include the ornamental decoration on the gates of the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, a silver bowl for Lord Curzon and the silver cup in the present portrait, which was commissioned by a city livery company and shown at the Royal Academy exhibition of modern craftsmanship in 1936: "...this cup was fashioned from a single sheet of silver, as was also the cover, the bird conventionalized as a knob being worked up out of the same sheet – a truly remarkable and skillful example of what a particularly gifted silversmith can do."⁵

Provenance:

By descent in the family of the sitter



Bookplate with de László's coats of arms taken from Francis Adam's design for a fireback



A Key and brooch designed and made by Adam for de László

¹ These were in steel for the artist, silver for his wife Lucy and bronze for each of their five children.

² DLA026-0188, letter from de László to Francis Adam, 23 January 1935.

³ Philip de László, January–June 1935 diary, 25 May entry.

⁴ DLA026-0190, letter from Francis Adam to de László, 25 May 1935.

⁵ Augustus Steward, 'The Master Craftsman', *Silversmith and Optician*, January 1936, p. 55.



16

Anny Ahlers as Madame Dubarry

1933

Oil on canvas, 172.7 x 116.9 cm (68 x 46 in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László / 1933* –

Private Collection

The German actress and singer Anny Ahlers (1906–1933) came to London in 1932 to appear at His Majesty's Theatre in the role of Jeanne in the musical comedy *The Dubarry*. Sir Merrick Burrell saw her perform and was moved to commission a half-length portrait in costume from de László. The artist found his subject so inspiring that he painted a full-length instead, giving him the opportunity to paint the expansive layers of fabric of her costume. Encouraged by Burrell's words that "the picture of A.A. is a tribute of one artist to another" he painted one of the most successful full lengths of his career.¹

Frequently overworked, Anny Ahlers suffered from bouts of depression and often failed to appear for appointed sittings, which greatly irritated de László. On 14 March 1933, aged only twenty-six, she fell from the balcony of her London hotel room and died from a broken neck. The portrait was unfinished and de László explained how it was completed: "I have the dress, and Dreda sat for me. I was lucky in being able to finish the head, and her beautiful hands. She was a most delightful personality, and a born genius, and the world is the poorer for her death. I am afraid she had been overworked by one man whose name I do not wish to mention, who tried to make as much money out of her as possible."² Photographs in the artist's archive show the portrait both in its unfinished and finished states. The emerald ring on Anny's left hand was a present from Burrell.

The portrait was exhibited to great acclaim at the Knoedler Gallery that June with the title *The Late Miss Anny Ahlers* and coloured reproductions were sold in aid of the Artists' General Benevolent Institution. The *Daily Mail* wrote that "the liveliness of Mr de László's rendering [is] a melancholy reminder of the fragility of life."³ *The Star* pointed out that "ever since the exhibition opened the portrait of poor Anny Ahlers has been the centre of an admiring group, and a bowl of Du Barry roses stands in front of it."⁴ De László waived his honorarium for the portrait.⁵

Theatrical portraiture in the Grand Manner style was a particularly English development in the 18th century by artists such as Sir Joshua



Annie Ahlers sitting for her portrait in the artist's studio shortly before her death

Reynolds whose full-length portrait of *Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse* is perhaps the most famous of the type. A version from Reynolds' studio was part of the collection at Dulwich Picture Gallery near London. This is the same gallery where de László found inspiration for his 1928 portrait of the Prince of Piedmont based on Van Dyck's portrait of his ancestor, the Duke of Savoy.

Provenance:

Sir Merrick Burrell, Bart.;

By descent in the family;

Sold by the Christopher Wood Gallery in 2004

Exhibited:

• M. Knoedler & Co., London, *Portraits by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 21 June–22 July 1933, no. 6

• Victoria Art Galleries, Dundee, *Loan Exhibition*, Autumn 1934

• Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 123

• Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, *Philip de László: "I am an artist of the world..."*, 27 September 2019–5 January 2020, no. 16

Selected Bibliography:

• Rutter 1939, p. 373, ill. opp. p. 384

• Clifford 1969, monochrome ill. pl. 46

• de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, pp. 26, 60, 188–189, ill. p. 189

• Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, pp. 236–240, 245, 252, ill. 122

• Hart-Davis & Somfalvi 2019, ill. 158

• Hungarian National Gallery 2019, pp. 36, 80, 82, ill. p. 83

¹ DLA052-0031, letter from Sir Merrick Burrell to de László, 9 November 1932.

² DLA020-0225, letter from de László to Mrs Richard Hermon, 22 May 1933. Dreda, later Lady Tryon, was the daughter of Sir Merrick Burrell.

³ *Daily Mail*, 21 June 1933.

⁴ *The Star*, 24 June 1933.

⁵ See DLA020-0225, *op. cit.*



17
Alfred Lys Baldry

1918

Oil on canvas, 80 x 64.2 cm (31 ½ x 25 ¼ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *László / 1918 Nov. 16*

Private Collection

De László's friendship with the art historian and critic Alfred Lys Baldry (1858–1939) began in 1911 when Baldry wrote his first article about the artist in *The Studio*. Nearly one hundred and fifty letters in the artist's archive attest to the importance of their friendship as they discussed the exhibitions and paintings they saw on their travels as well as their similarly negative views on the rise of Modernism.¹ Baldry was also a mediating influence on his friend, repeatedly encouraging him to rest and enjoy painting for painting's sake, away from his relentless schedule of commissions and resultant travel.

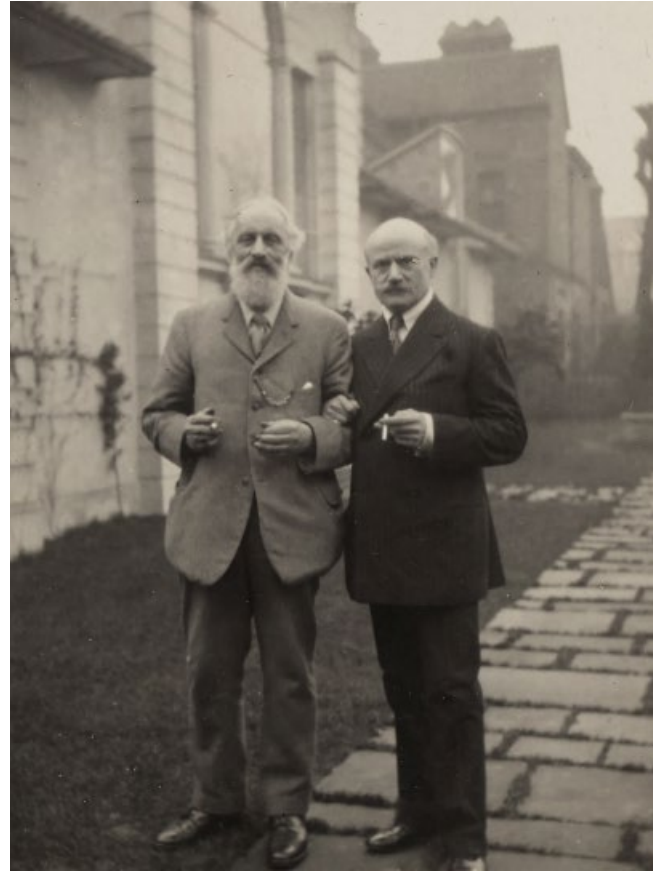
During de László's internment in the First World War, Home Secretary Sir George Cave gave Baldry permission to visit the artist after his release in May 1918 to a nursing home. This was a rare permission previously only granted to his wife, children and Lucy's sister Eva. This portrait was painted in November that year. Baldry was of Spanish descent which may have prompted de László to paint him in the 17th-century costume that he had worn as fancy dress in about 1912 and which he used as a studio prop. He painted a second portrait of Baldry wearing it in December 1918 as well as four of his sons between 1918 and 1919; the one of his son Stephen in the garden at Littleworth Corner is included in this exhibition [Cat. 34].

Lucy de László recorded this portrait in her diary for 1918:

*Today Mr Baldry went to P's after Breakfast & remained with him till about 6.0'C. When I came to spend the evg about that hour, the picture was finished. Most interesting & classical – interesting light effects! It was only last time Mr B. posed that P. began this picture. He says he c~~d~~ not paint the pictures he used to any more – in the conventional light of a north light studio – “I have quite changed my ideas.”*²

Baldry was also an artist and in 1877 he won a scholarship to The South Kensington School of Art and was later a student of Albert Moore. He first exhibited in the early 1880s and continued to do so throughout his life. As well as writing frequently for *The Studio* magazine, Baldry was the art critic for *The Globe* from 1893–1908 and London art critic for the *Birmingham Post* for about thirty years. He also made contributions to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He published monographs on Albert Moore (1894), Sir John Everett Millais (1899), Hubert von Herkomer (1901) and G. H. Boughton (1904).³

Baldry authored several articles on de László, including 'Some Recent Portraits by Philip A. László', *The Studio*, September 1911; 'Recent Portraits by Philip A. de László', *The Studio*, August 1916; 'Some Paintings and Drawings by Mr. P. A. de László', *The Studio*, February 1921; 'Philip de László: Painter of Beautiful Women', *Woman's Journal*, April 1928; and 'Philip A. de László: An Appreciation', *The London Studio*, February 1938.



De László and Baldry outside the artist's studio at 3 Fitzjohn's Avenue, c. 1922

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;

By descent

Exhibited:

•Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 81

Selected Bibliography:

- Bury 1933, p. 22, ill.
- Rutter 1939, p. 333
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 147, ill.
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 168, ill. 95
- Hart-Davis & Somfalvi 2019, ill. 120

¹ This is discussed more fully in Katherine Field's essay in this catalogue.

² Lucy de László, 1918 diary, 1 November entry.

³ De László rented Boughton's studio at West House on Campden Hill when he moved to London in 1907. The house was designed by Norman Shaw.



18

Prince Arthur Duke of Connaught and Strathearn

1937

Oil on canvas, 99.7 x 75 cm (39 ¼ x 29 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *de László / 1937*

The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce



De László, holding his cine camera, in conversation with the Duke of Connaught

De László expressed his desire to paint the Duke of Connaught after meeting him in May 1935 at the London home of the Countess of Antrim, a former lady-in-waiting to both Queen Victoria and Queen Alexandra.¹ He found his opportunity in May 1936 after giving a lecture at the Royal Society of Arts entitled *The Art of our Day* in which he conveyed his ideas about contemporary art. Shortly after, he painted the Duke in his robes as a Knight of the Garter for presentation to the Royal Society where the sitter served as President between 1911 and 1942.

Sittings were due to take place in October 1936 but de László suffered a serious heart attack in August and they were postponed until the following summer. By then the Duke was unwell and it was not until October 1937 that the artist travelled to his home at Bagshot Park, south of Windsor.

After the portrait was completed, de László wrote to the American diplomat Edward Tuck describing an earlier portrait of the Duke as an infant and aligning his own portrait with it as an important historical record: “The Duke is really rather frail; he is eighty-five ... and I am glad to have had the opportunity of painting this grand seigneur. A spirit from the great Victorian time will pass away with him. It was so interesting when I was at his home in the country, where on account of his health I had to go to paint the portrait, to see there a portrait of him as a baby, sitting in the lap of his Mother, Queen Victoria, with his Father, Prince Albert, standing beside her, and in front of them the Duke of Wellington is kneeling and presenting the baby Duke, who was his god-son, with a golden casket. The portrait is by Winterhalter, and the Duke of Connaught is still with us.”²

De László died just a month later on 22 November 1937; the Duke of Connaught survived him by more than four years. The Duke of Gloucester unveiled the portrait at the Royal Society of Arts and the press described it as the last portrait the artist completed. Although de László had been working on other portraits at the time, the Duke’s signature was the last in the artist’s Sitters’ Book.

Exhibited:

- Wildenstein & Co., Ltd., London, *Exhibition of Paintings by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 24 November–22 December 1937, no. 17
- BADA Art & Antiques Fair, London, *Philip de László: 150th Anniversary Exhibition*, 20–26 March 2019, no. 14

Selected Bibliography:

- Holme 1934, p. 50 and ill. in colour, p. 51, pl. XX
- Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 86, no. 4435, 19 November 1937, p. 19, ill. p. 20
- The Illustrated London News*, 27 November 1937, p. 951, ill.
- ‘László Fülöpöt az angol sajtó az arcképfestészet legnagyobb hősei közé sorozza’ [Philip de László is Ranked Among the Greatest Heroes of Portrait Painting by the English Press], *Pesti Hírlap*, 28 November 1937, p. 14
- Rutter 1939, pp. 377–378
- Noble Frankland, *Witness of a Century: The Life and Times of Prince Arthur Duke of Connaught, 1850–1942*, London, 1993, p. 382, ill. dustjacket
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 39, ill. p. 38, fig. 29
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 281, ill. 145
- Hart-Davis & Somfalvi 2019, ill. 179
- BADA 2019, pp. 23, 54, ill. p. 55
- Hungarian National Gallery 2019, p. 47

¹ Philip de László, January–June 1935 diary, 17 May entry.

² DLA025-0123, letter from de László to Edward Tuck, 28 October 1937.

THE ARTIST'S WAR (1914–1919)

De László experienced the First World War as both a patriotic contributor to the war effort and as a prisoner. His story provides a unique perspective on the experience of enemy nationals in Britain during the period. De László was living in London when war was declared on 4 August 1914 and became extremely busy responding to an intense demand for portraits from serving officers and their families. Between 1914 and 1917 he completed nearly eighty of these at a reduced rate of £50 to £100 compared to his usual fee of £400 for a half-length portrait. His speed was an important factor; his portrait of Captain Maurice Trouton is inscribed “during one sitting.”

His portraits were particularly poignant for the families of those who were killed. Captain Thomas Nelson was painted in service dress in 1916 and killed just six months later. As with all his sitters who did not return, the artist added a cross to mark his death in the Sitters' Book. In July 1917 de László received a letter from Doctor Alexander Barbour: “Your portrait of my cousin Lieut. T. A. Nelson who fell in France last April is a priceless possession to his widow and Mother now. How many homes you have comforted in these sad days.”¹

De László joined the wider art world in making important charitable contributions in support of the war effort. Christie's held seven auctions during this time in aid of the British Red Cross by selling valuable works of art donated in lieu of cash. De László donated three blank canvases and his portrait of renowned beauty Madame Letellier was purchased on 15 May 1915 by the art dealer Lockett Agnew for £800. Another sold for £1000, a significant sum when compared to the Royal Academy's selling exhibition opened by the King and Queen in 1915. Of the 800 works on display, 167 pictures were sold raising £5,643. One third of the profits went to both the Red Cross and Artists' General Benevolent Institution, while artists received the remaining third.² The excitement generated at these auctions was vividly described by Mrs Arthur Bowlby after attending the 1916 sale:

*Bravissimo – how I wish you could have been there this afternoon to see the reception that your canvas produced. As soon as your name was called out, people stamped on the floor and clapped, and there was a regular hum, far more than when Lavery's name came up. The bidding started at 400 guineas and went up quickly to 850, there it hung for a minute level with Lavery's. I tell you the air was taut with excitement. I nearly shouted 'fifty,' just for the joy of putting it up. However, the moment passed and up it went with a bound to 1,000. How everybody clapped and stamped! It was the most exciting moment I have had for years. I can't say how pleased we are, for we can appreciate a little what it means to you, and how truly you deserve it all and far more. It was a great moment for your son to go thro. Lucy did look proud and happy.*³

De László first wrote of his desire to become a naturalised British subject in a letter to his brother Marcsi in 1912.⁴ Due to pressures of work and loyalty to his native Hungary, he did not instruct his solicitor to commence proceedings until 21 June 1914. He was granted British subject status on 29 August 1914 and swore the oath of allegiance on 2 September.

The artist had long supported his family in Hungary by regular payments of money and they corresponded frequently. He continued this practice after the outbreak of war with his letters being passed through General Post Office censors. De László also sent five letters through the Dutch diplomatic mail bag at the suggestion of Adriana van Riemsdijk. Her brother John Loudon was the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and had given his consent. De László was first questioned by police regarding payments to his family in February 1915 and warned against doing so. After censors intercepted a letter referring to money transfers on 3 March, his post was secretly opened and monitored by the Post Office Special Section. The Home Office began building a case against him and



Captain Thomas Arthur Nelson, 1916



Robert Wynn-Carington, Viscount Wendover, was killed at Ypres in 1915. His mother wrote of the portrait when it was painted in 1911: "I feel a warm glow round my heart every time I think of it, it is a beautiful picture, and what a good, living, portrait of our boy."

considered charging him under the *Trading with the Enemy Act* but decided to caution him instead.

De László was visited at his studio on 17 July 1917 by Árpád Horn, an escaped Hungarian officer from Donington Hall prisoner of war camp. The artist gave him £1 for food and sent him away. De László reported the incident to the police the following day and Horn was arrested and returned to prison. Failure to report the incident immediately, discovery that letters had been sent to an enemy nation uncensored through the Dutch diplomatic bag, and repeated attempts to send money to his Hungarian family led to his arrest on 21 September 1917 under the *Defence of the Realm Act* and he was imprisoned in Brixton Prison.

The case was heard before the Advisory Review Committee headed by Justice Sankey at Westminster Hall on 28 September 1917. Sir Luke Fildes, The Earl of Selborne, Sir Arthur Lee and William Lockett Agnew gave evidence in support of de László. The case was adjourned and he was returned to Brixton Prison before being moved on 7 November to the Camp for Interned Enemy Aliens at the Cornwallis Road Institution, a former workhouse in Upper Holloway. It is also referred to by the artist as Islington Internment Camp. There he joined approximately seven hundred other foreign

nationals, some of whom became close friends. One of these was the German industrialist Theodore Bruno Kittel [Cat. 24]. The Advisory Committee reviewed de László's case on 20 December but he was denied release based on concerns expressed by MI5.

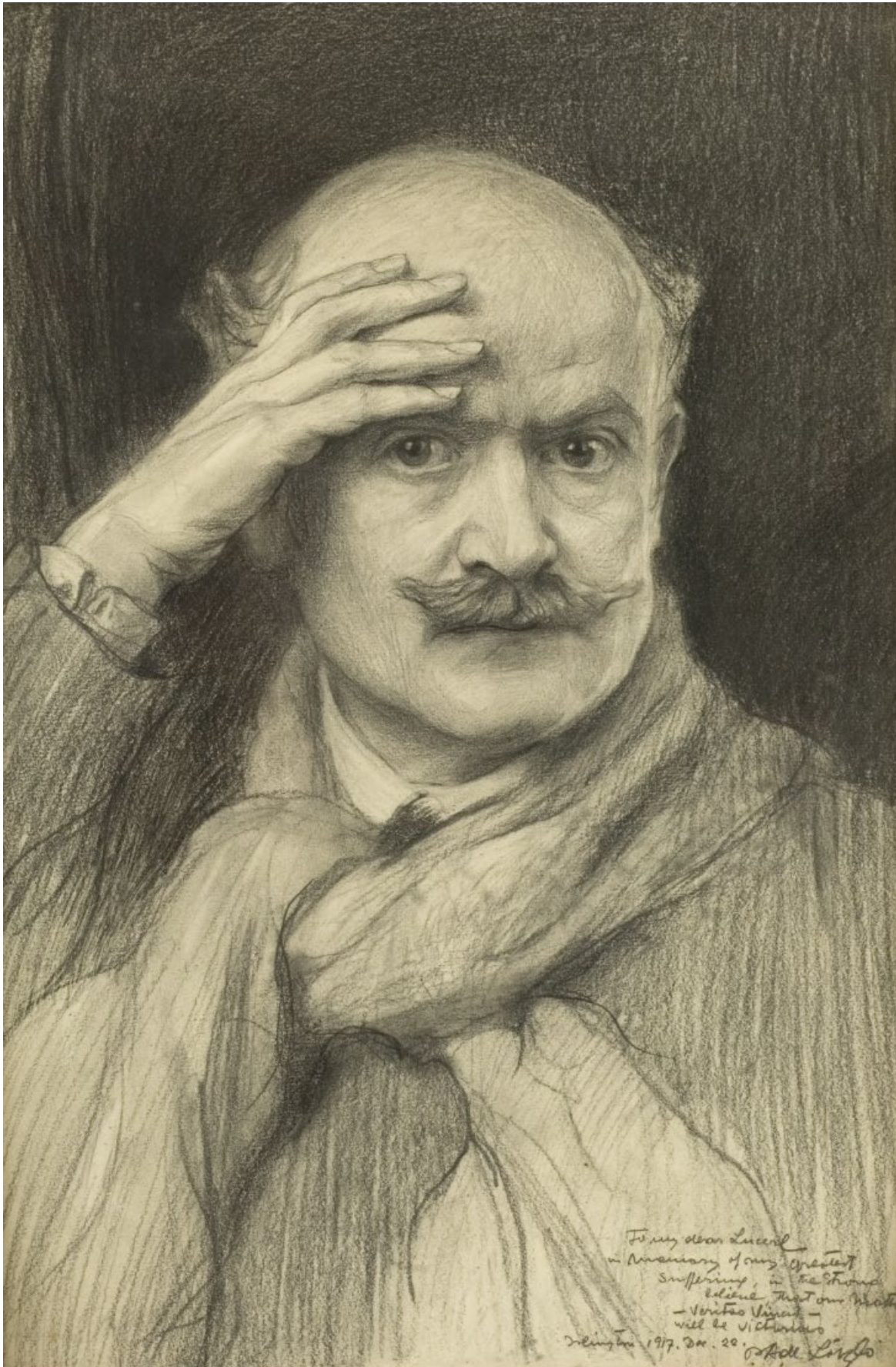
These pressures on de László, coupled with his financial responsibilities, led to a complete physical and psychological breakdown. He was admitted to St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, and then granted permission by the Home Office in May 1918 to be released to the care of a nursing home in Ladbroke Gardens, Notting Hill. He was kept under strict house arrest but allowed to receive visits from his wife and children. He was also allowed to paint in oil again having been restricted to pencil and watercolour while at Brixton and Islington. He painted still lifes, religious subjects and intimate portraits of his wife Lucy and their children. His close friend Alfred Lys Baldry was also permitted to visit and he wrote to Lucy about the artist's state of mind:

I am sorry of course that Mr de Laszlo's condition of health makes a nursing home necessary but I feel that anything which will get him out of his deadly surroundings at Holloway is to be welcomed. It was quite time that he had a change: I found him, when I saw him last, looking, as I thought, very much worse for his confinement and I felt much worried about him.⁵

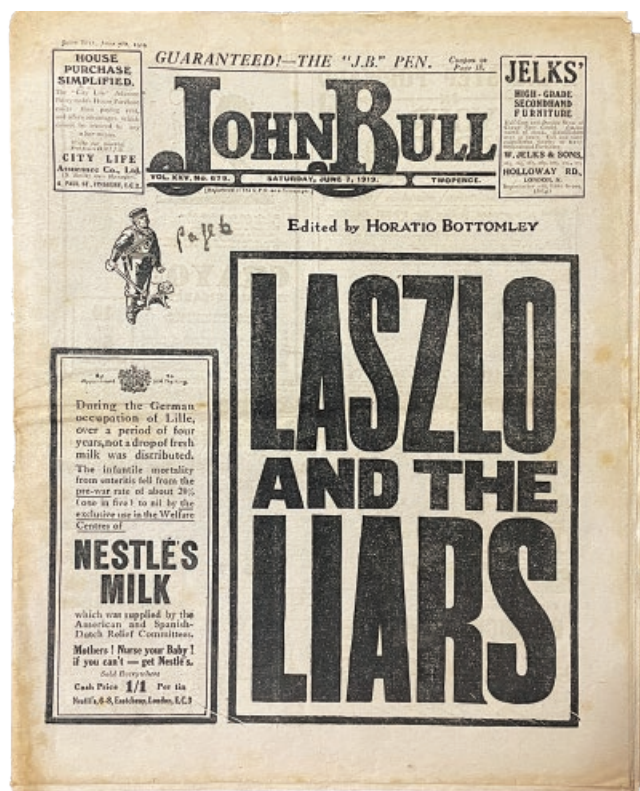
His move was kept secret because, from the moment of his arrest, public opinion was stirred against him by the press, particularly Horatio Bottomley's *John Bull*. The seriousness of the attacks should not be underestimated since, at their worst, they called for the artist to be shot. Anyone helping the artist also risked being targeted as this excerpt from *John Bull* shows; the paragraph was headed 'That Traitor Laszlo':

And let me pause to say this: Laszlo the traitor was vouched for by Mr. Balfour, then Foreign Secretary, Lord Devonport, Sir Arthur Lee, now Lord Lee (both ex-ministers), and by Mr. Howard Guinness. They went bail for his "loyalty"; yet he was afterwards found in traitorous communication with the enemy—this "British" citizen who should have been court-martialled and shot. But he is a friend of the exalted and the rich; he has painted half the Cabinet and nine-tenths of Society; he was a welcome guest in the houses of the great; he used his position to worm out our military secrets and convey them by letter—nearly fifty of them—to the enemy.⁶

Following his internment in September 1917, Alfred Harmsworth, 1st Viscount Northcliffe's newspapers *The Times* and *Daily Mail* vilified him. The artist was particularly hurt by Harmsworth's attacks as he had painted his portrait in 1908, his mother in 1913 and nephews Vere and Vyvyan in 1916. Both nephews were killed in the war. Northcliffe was one of the few members of the Establishment who opposed de László's application for British Nationality, perhaps as a result of their dinner together on 28 June 1914, the day Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated:



Inscribed: To my dear Lucerl / in memory of my greatest / suffering, in the strong / believe, that our Motto / - veritas vincit - / will be victorious / Islington 1917. Dec. 22. / P.A. de László



On the day of the assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand, the artist was a guest of the Northcliffes near London. They were just sitting down to dinner when at seven o'clock in the evening, a courier arrived from London with an urgent telegram. Northcliffe opened it, sat pensive for a while, but said nothing at all to anyone. Then he passed the telegram to his wife, on whose right Fülöp László happened to be sitting. The lady turned pale when she read the message and passed it to her neighbour. László was no less appalled by the telegram and involuntarily burst out, "A terrible war will come of this!" This had been his first thought on seeing the monstrous news, and unbidden he had given voice to his sentiment. The other members of the party did not share his belief that the incident would have such serious consequences and although Fülöp László himself had not immediately envisaged a European conflict

in which Britain would also become involved, his reaction was later used against him and during the war he was accused of having had prior knowledge that war was imminent.⁷

An amendment to the *Nationality and Status of Aliens Bill* in July 1918 mandated a review of all naturalisations granted after the beginning of the war with the possibility of revocation. Although this guaranteed de László's continued internment until his case could be heard, he was permitted to live under house arrest with his family at the home of his solicitor, Sir Charles Russell, at Littleworth Corner in Buckinghamshire. This proved to be one of de László's most creative periods as he was free to paint for pure enjoyment rather than dealing with the demands of portrait commissions. His wife Lucy and children were his primary subjects, as were the house and its surroundings.

De László's case was heard by the Naturalisation Revocation Committee, chaired by Justice Salter, Viscount Hambleden and Judge Radcliffe, during a trial that lasted from 23–27 June 1919. All concerns expressed by the Advisory Committee were addressed and the artist Sir John Lavery, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Austen Chamberlain and Mrs van Riemsdyk appeared as character witnesses. The latter came from Holland despite being mortally ill.

The Committee ruled:

No disloyalty or disaffection has been proved...although there have been breaches of the law in regard to the money, and the carriage of letters, they were inadvertent and stopped when discovered; and with regard to the Horn incident, and to the case generally, we are satisfied that there has not been on the part of Mr de László any conduct which would merit or justify the withdrawal from him of the British citizenship which he enjoys.⁸

Though exonerated, internment deprived de László of his freedom, family, livelihood, art, and friends from September 1917 until June 1919. He was the most famous portrait painter in the world and the temporary loss of his reputation affected him deeply. After his release he worked relentlessly to re-establish himself driven by the same passionate belief in his art that had brought such heights of success from such humble beginnings.

1 DLA014-0005, letter from Alexander Barbour to de László, 24 July 1917.

2 *The Times*, 20 March 1915, p. 7. The article states that some artists refused their third and it was shared between the charities. It is not known if de László was one of these artists, but it would be typical of him.

3 Rutter 1939, p. 306. The artist's canvas sold for 250 guineas more than Lavery's.

4 DLA171-0286, De László's defence statement for the Alien Advisory Committee (Final Copy), 9 October 1917.

5 DLA166-0003, letter from Alfred Lys Baldry to Lucy de László, 17 May 1918.

6 Charles Palmer, 'The Case of Caroline Hanemann. Together with the Scandals of Laszlo, Baron Bruno Schroder and Others', *John Bull*, 17 May 1919, p. 6.

7 'Beszélgetés László Fülöppel, a királyok festővel, a német császáról Mussoliniról és készülő memoárjairól' [In conversation with Fülöp László, painter of kings, about the German Emperor, Mussolini and his forthcoming memoirs], *Pesti Hírlap*, 4 October 1925, p. 38. *Pesti Hírlap* was a popular daily newspaper in Hungary.

8 DLA171-008, Certificate of Naturalization Revocation Committee Judgement, 27 June 1919.



19
*Hudson Ewbanke Kearley,
1st Viscount Devonport*

1914

Oil on canvas, 238.8 x
129.6 cm (94 x 51 in.)

Inscribed lower left: *P.
A. de László / 1914 XII*

On loan from the present
Viscount Devonport to
Cranleigh School, Surrey

Lord Devonport served as a member of Lloyd George's War Cabinet during the First World War and was painted wearing the robes and court dress of a Privy Councillor. His was one of the most important friendships of the artist's life. An avid patron, he was painted four times and commissioned portraits of his wife and important historical figures such as Field Marshal Lord Roberts, The Rt. Hon. Timothy Healy, 1st Governor-General of the Irish Free State, and Prime Minister David Lloyd George.

Devonport was one of de László's sponsors for his British naturalisation in 1914 and throughout the artist's arrest and internment he worked tirelessly on his behalf, arguing his case to Home Secretary Sir George Cave. It was due in part to his efforts, combined with those of Lord Sheffield, Sir Austen Chamberlain, Lord Lee of Fareham and Lord Selborne, that de László was released from a nursing home to house arrest at Littleworth Corner in December 1918 [Cat 29] and finally exonerated.¹

The sitter first met de László in 1912 when sitting for an earlier portrait. In his testimony on the artist's behalf for the Naturalisation Revocation Committee hearing in June 1919 he stated:

He always gave me the idea of a cultured and intellectual man, very fond of conversation, and generally a most interesting man...He first spoke to me about his intentions in 1912, and in 1913, June or July, asked me to be one of his sponsors. I signed his papers in July 1914. He always spoke of English people with great friendliness, and appreciation of the many kindnesses he had received at their homes. He frequently stayed with people of standing and distinction...I never witnessed any action of his which indicated anything but that of a well wisher to England.²

The present portrait was rejected by the Royal Academy in summer 1915 on the grounds that de László was born in Hungary, a country that was at war with Britain. Lord Devonport was extremely indignant about this:

Yes, indeed, you were right in your conception of the meanness to which jealous rivals will descend. I confess that I had a broader view of my countrymen. But they have belied me. To describe such a mean and petty excuse for the exclusion of your work as scandalous is to put it in mild terms. They know as well as I do that you are a British subject, and that as such you are entitled to equal terms and equal treatment with the best of them. We all know that success breeds 'envy, hatred and malice' among those who grudge it because they cannot command or gain it for

themselves. It is their only refuge! But you have your triumph in standing at the top of the tree in the 'empty frame' competition at Christie's last week. Easily first! and Sargent a respectable second! What more can you desire?³

Devonport's home at Wittington, near Marlow, was close to Littleworth Corner [Cat. 29] and he took the opportunity to visit de László soon after the artist's move there. His visit was no doubt a fascinating diversion for de László. Devonport had recently returned from Germany where he joined with the British Army to inspect the state of the country after the Armistice nearly two months earlier.⁴ De László knew the area well, having studied in Munich and painted many of the great families before the war, including the German Emperor in 1909.

Hudson Ewanke Kearley (1856–1934) founded the firm of Heseltine & Kearley (later International Stores) in Brentford in 1878. In 1892 he began his career in politics and was elected as Liberal member for Devonport, which he represented until January 1910. In 1905 he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Board of Trade and his services were recognised by the conferment of a baronetcy in 1908. In the same year he conducted the *Port of London Bill* through the House of Commons and became the first chairman of the newly constituted Port of London Authority, a position he held until his retirement in 1925. Sworn to the Privy Council in 1909, he was raised to the peerage as Baron Devonport of Wittington in the County of Buckingham in 1910.

In November 1916 Lloyd George appointed him first Food Controller. During his tenure a voluntary scheme of rationing was developed and his proposals for implementing compulsory rationing were accepted by the War Cabinet. He resigned from office on the grounds of ill health in May 1917 and was advanced to a Viscountcy at that time. He and de László remained close for the rest of their lives. Devonport was painted in shooting dress in 1920, not as a commission but as a token of thanks from the artist for his support throughout his internment.

Exhibited:

•Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 61

Selected Bibliography:

- de László & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, pp. 27, 128–129, ill. p. 129
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, pp. 145, 147

¹ DLA166-0012, letter from Lord Devonport to Lucy de László, 10 December 1918. A portrait of Lord Sheffield painted in 1919 is inscribed: "Edward Lyulph, Lord Sheffield / painted by Philip de László / and given by him in affectionate memory / of the sitter's friendship and support during / the persecution endured by the painter / when he was interned during the great War. / This picture is a replica of one painted by the artist for himself, along with those of / other friends, Lord Lee of Fareham, Mr. Austen / Chamberlain and the Earl of Selborne who / also comforted him in those sad days."

² DLA163-0003, Lord Devonport's character witness statement in defence of the artist for the Naturalization Revocation Committee, 1919.

³ Rutter 1939, p. 303.

⁴ DLA166-0011, letter from Lord Devonport to Lucy de László, 3 January 1919.



20

Sir Philip Sassoon, 3rd Baronet Sassoon

1915

Oil on canvas, 88.9 x 71.1 cm (35 x 28 in.)

Inscribed lower right: *P. A. de László / 1915. II. I.*

Private Collection

Lucy de László noted in her 1915 diary that the artist was painting this portrait on 30 January, indicating there was more than one sitting.¹ It was completed and dated on 1 February. This was unusual for de László's war portraits as most sitters only had limited time while home on leave or about to depart for the front. As a result this is one of the artist's most successful war portraits, alongside those of James [Cat. 22] and John McEwen [Cat. 23].

Sassoon had recently attended the 1 December 1914 meeting at the Château Demont at Merville in France between King George V, the President of France Raymond Poincaré, Maréchal Foch and Generals Rawlinson and Joffre. He was a fluent French speaker and his connections and natural diplomacy made his presence invaluable. Soon after the meeting Sassoon was appointed Private Secretary to Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander in Chief of the British Armies in France, a post he would hold until 1919.

Philip Albert Gustave David Sassoon was born in Paris on 4 December 1888, son of Sir Edward Albert Sassoon, 2nd Baronet Sassoon and his wife Aline, daughter of Baron Gustave de Rothschild. He succeeded his father in 1912 and became one of the richest men in England, inheriting nearly a million pounds as well as properties in London, Sandgate, Brighton and Bombay.

An earlier letter dated January 1908 from the sitter's mother to de László suggests the artist had offered suggestions to aid Sassoon's move to Munich that year to improve his German.² The artist may have been introduced to the Sassoons through their Rothschild connections.³ He painted the sitter's uncle Baron Robert de Rothschild in 1911 and his wife Nelly, née de Beer, in 1913 and 1922. He also painted the sitter's brother-in-law Sir George Cholmondeley, 5th Marquess of Cholmondeley in 1915.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Sassoon was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Royal East Kent Yeomanry and served under General Rawlinson before taking up his post with Haig. An accomplished pilot, he became Under-Secretary of State for Air 1924–29 and again from 1931–37. He was also Honorary Commodore of No. 601 Squadron RAF also known as the 'Millionaires Squadron.' His final government post was Commissioner of Works from 1937–39 responsible for the decoration and upkeep of all government property and some royal palaces. Under his tenure the state rooms at Hampton Court were restored and Downing Street was refurnished and hung with pictures from the National Gallery. He also worked closely with Queen Mary on several projects including the choice of hangings in the Queen's Chapel at St James's Palace.

Sassoon was a connoisseur of the fine and decorative arts and expressed his tastes at his homes Trent Park in Hertfordshire and Port Lympne near Romney Marsh in Kent. He and his sister had also been left large collections by their Rothschild grandparents and Sassoon collected French decorative arts and English 18th-century paintings. He commissioned Rex Whistler, Glyn Philpot and José Maria Sert to paint murals at Port Lympne. He was also a renowned host and there were many de László sitters among his guests: the Duke of York, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Lord Curzon, Sir Austen Chamberlain, Vita Sackville-West, and Prime Ministers David Lloyd George, Arthur Balfour and David Asquith and his wife Margot. Others included the Prince of Wales, George Bernard Shaw, Osbert Sitwell, Giles Lytton Strachey, and Sir Harold Nicolson.

Sassoon served as a trustee of the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery, the Wallace Collection, and the British School at Rome. He organised exhibitions every spring in aid of charity which he held in his London home at 25 Park Lane. They included, 'The Age of Walnut,' 'The Four Georges' and 'Conversation Pieces.' The last was held in 1930 and was the first serious exhibition of English 18th-century conversation pieces since the First World War, reviving the genre and reputation of Johann Zoffany (1733–1810). Sassoon died on 3 June 1939 at his house in Park Lane after a short illness, aged just fifty.

Provenance:

Sybil Sassoon, wife of the 5th Marquess of Cholmondeley, sister of the sitter;

By descent in the family

Exhibited:

- Grosvenor Gallery, London, *Fourth Annual Exhibition of the National Portrait Society*, March–April 1915
- Thos. Agnew & Sons. Ltd., London, *The Collections of Sir Philip Sassoon*, April–May 2003
- The Jewish Museum, New York, *The Sassoons*, 3 March–13 August 2023

Selected Bibliography:

- Rutter 1939, p. 302
- Peter Stansky, *Sassoon: The Worlds of Philip & Sybil*, New Haven & London, 2003, p. 52, ill. p. 54, pl. 22
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 25, fig. 13
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 149

¹ Lucy de László, 1915 diary, 30 January entry.

² DLA011-0031, letter from Aline Sassoon to de László, January 1908.

³ In 1902 de László was commissioned by the 11th duc de Gramont and his wife baronne Marguerite-Alexandrine von Rothschild to paint their family and the artist stayed with them for an extended period at Château de Vallière.

21

Risaldar Jagat Singh and Risaldar Man Singh

1916

Oil on board, 90.2 x 69.9 cm (35 ½ x 27 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *P. A. de László / 1916. May 1*

NOT EXHIBITED

A number of Indian Cavalry officers visited de László's London studio in May 1916. De László convinced two of the officers to pose for him and the present picture was completed for the artist's own pleasure and remained in his collection until his death.¹ It is one of the finest examples of his study portraits painted during the First World War and was greatly admired by Austen Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for India. He asked de László to produce a small version for a Red Cross Sale organised by Lady Willingdon, the wife of the Viceroy, in Bombay. De László opted instead to paint a one-sitting sketch of another Indian officer for the nominal fee of 50 guineas, which was then raffled for £650.²

This sensitive portrait was completed in a short sitting of 2–3 hours and de László captured the solemn dignity of these two professional soldiers. As a double portrait it is unique among his First World War portraits. Both men signed the Sitters' Book in English and GurmukhiIt, a Sikh script predominantly used in the Punjab, India. It is not known why these two cavalry officers were on leave from their respective regiments, which were stationed in France at the time of painting. Amongst the trenches and wire of the front line there was little use for cavalry in its usual role and much of their war was spent waiting to take part in the action without being deployed. Both regiments eventually used their men in trench warfare and particularly at the Battle of the Somme which began 1 July 1916, two months after this portrait was painted.

There are various spellings of the Indian ranks but risaldar and ressaidar both appear in contemporary Indian Army Lists. Risaldar is the Indian cavalry equivalent of a subadar and roughly equal in rank to a British captain. Ressaidar was a slightly lower rank and abolished in 1921, with all ressaidars becoming risaldars. During the First World War there were many temporary promotions and transfers so both men seem to have been given an acting rank that is not the same as in the Indian Army Lists. This was not unusual.

Risaldar Jagat Singh joined the Indian Army on 26 February 1905 as a jemadar (junior Indian officer) in the 12th Cavalry and was promoted to ressaidar on 11 April 1916 in the 18th King George's Own Lancers. He was subsequently promoted risaldar on 11 August

1918 when he is listed in the 12th Cavalry but still attached to the 18th. It is likely he was acting in that rank in 1916 when the portrait was painted.

Ressaidar Man Singh joined the Indian Army on 1 March 1890 as a sowar (a cavalry trooper). He was promoted to jemadar on 1 May 1910 in the 21st Prince Albert Victor's Own Cavalry before further promotion to ressaidar on 11 April 1916 in the 20th Deccan Horse. He seems not to be listed after 1917 though also not appearing among the dead in the Indian Army Lists. The sitter is also known to have been awarded the Indian Order of Merit 3rd Class on 3 November 1894 for gallantry in action at the defence of Camp Wano in a campaign in Waziristan, on the north-west frontier of India.³

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;

By descent;

Sold Spink, date unknown

Exhibited:

- Grosvenor Gallery, London, *The International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers Autumn Exhibition*, Autumn 1916, no. 68
- Nemzeti Szalon, Budapest, 1924, no. 137
- Royal West of England Academy, Bristol, *88th Annual Exhibition*, November 1933–February 1934, no. 172
- Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 70
- The Brunei Gallery, SOAS, London, *Empire, Faith & War: The Sikhs and World War One*, 9 July–28 September 2014
- Tate Britain, London, *Artist and Empire*, 25 November 2015–6 April 2016

Selected Bibliography:

- Baldry 1916, p. 156, ill.
- Rutter 1939, p. 306
- Clifford 1969, monochrome ill. pl. 34
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 150
- Hungarian National Gallery 2019, p. 25, ill.

¹ Rutter 1939, p. 306.

² The equivalent of approximately £38,400 in 2024.

³ We are grateful to Pip Dodd, Curator at the National Army Museum, London for his assistance with this entry.





22

Lieutenant James Robert Dundas McEwen

1915

Oil on canvas, 95.3 x 73.7 cm (37 ½ x 29 in.)

Inscribed lower left: *P A de László / 1915 V*

Private Collection

De László painted the sitter's elder brother John [Cat. 23] the month before the present picture. Both portraits are unusual in the artist's war portraiture for their highly finished state compared to the more usual study portraits. Other officers painted by de László in May 1915 were Vere Ponsonby, 9th Earl of Bessborough, Sir Francis Lloyd, Richard Crichton, Desmond Trouton and Valentine Fleming. By 1917 both Trouton and Fleming were dead.

This portrait was painted in May 1915 and in June the artist and his wife Lucy were invited to stay with the McEwen family at Marchmont, their grand Palladian home in Berwickshire. It was a welcome diversion from the war and Lucy recounts playing a Bach duet on a Stradivarius with the sitter's sister Katharine.¹ They travelled back to London with the sitter and some changes were made to the portrait at the studio before James rejoined his regiment in France.

James "Jim" Robert Dundas McEwen was born on 29 July 1896 in Edinburgh, the second son of Robert Finnie McEwen and his wife Mary Frances Dundas of Marchmont, Berwickshire and Bardrochat, Ayrshire. He gained a place at Trinity College, Cambridge, in the summer of 1914, but postponed his entry on the declaration of war to volunteer for the Royal Scots Fusiliers, his local regiment in Ayrshire.

James McEwen was known for his gentle nature and twin-like relationship with his brother John. He had a deep love of the countryside and showed promise as a bird and equine artist before his life was cut short. During his last dinner with his parents and sister at Bardrochat while on leave, one of the four candles in the dining room persistently went out. All noticed but no one mentioned it until his father broke the silence on the road home from dropping the sitter at the station: "We will never see Jim again."² He was killed in action a month later on 12 October 1916 in the final days of the battle of the Somme, near Bapaume. His name can be found on the Thiepval Memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, commemorating the 72,337 missing British and South African servicemen who have no known grave.

*Exhibited:*

•National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., *The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Collecting*, 3 November 1985–16 March 1986, no. 574

Selected Bibliography:

- Gervase Jackson-Stops, *The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Collecting*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1985, p. 645
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 148

¹ Lucy de László, 1915 diary, 6 June entry.

² *J.R.D. McEwen: A Memoir*, privately published by J.H.F. McEwen, 1930.

23

Lieutenant John Helias Finnie McEwen

1915

Oil on board, 85.1 x 68 cm (33 ½ x 26 ¾ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *P A de László / 25 April / 1915*

Private Collection

The portraits of brothers John and James McEwen [Cat. 22] exemplify the tragedy of war as one brother survived whilst the other did not return. These wartime portraits were of immeasurable value to the families left behind, serving as vivid reminders of their loved ones and more tangible than any photograph could be. Both portraits were commissioned by the sitters' father Robert Finnie McEwen and were painted within a month of each other in spring 1915. They hung together with the other family portraits painted by de László in the dining-room at Marchmont in Berwickshire.¹

Unlike his brother's portrait, the present picture seems to have been painted at Hammondswood, the country house de László rented near Frensham, Surrey. John McEwen signed the artist's Sitters' Book on 25 April and de László added the location in his own hand. This suggests a closeness between the families since most patrons were painted at the artist's studio in London.

John 'Jock' Helias Finnie McEwen was born on 21 June 1894, the eldest son of Robert Finnie McEwen and Mary Frances Dundas of Marchmont, Berwickshire and Bardrochat, Ayrshire. During the First World War, he served as a captain in the 5th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders before transferring to the Royal Flying Corps. On the night of 16 July 1916 he was engaged in a night bombing raid on Sallaumines with 2nd Lieutenant Harold Winstone Butterworth in their FE2b (5233) plane. They suffered engine failure at 1000 feet after being hit by machine gun fire. Both survived the crash but Butterworth was shot while trying to burn the plane; McEwen was thrown clear and taken prisoner for the remainder of the war.

Selected Bibliography:

- Rutter 1939, p. 298
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 148

¹ The sitter's sister Katharine in 1916, father in 1925, his mother in 1917 and his wife Bridget in 1930.





24

Theodore Bruno Kittel and Friedrich Wilhelm Braune Playing Chess at Islington Internment Camp

1918

Lithograph, 26 x 36.8 cm (10¼ x 14¼ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *P.A. de L. / 1918 III / Islington*

Inscribed verso by the artist: *To T.B. Kittel Esq. 1918 III Islington / in remembrance of our mutual sufferings*

Private Collection

On 7 November 1917 de László was moved from Brixton Prison to the Camp for Interned Enemy Aliens at the Cornwallis Road Institution, also referred to as Islington Internment Camp. The camp housed up to 750 German and Austro-Hungarian nationals at any one time. Though an improvement on Brixton, conditions at the camp, a former Victorian workhouse, were difficult and the artist's health declined.

De László and the two subjects of this drawing, Theodore Bruno Kittel (1856–1923) and Friedrich Wilhelm Braune (1880–1950), were kept in D Block. On 28 December 1917 they wrote to the Home Office in an effort to improve the situation for themselves and their visiting families. It was a heartfelt plea from professional men finding themselves in the most difficult of circumstances on account of their place of birth. Permission was denied.

We the undersigned internees have the honour to request you to grant permission to us to receive the visits of members of our families in our private rooms during the winter months. The rooms at the disposal for visits are during these months – especially when there is a north or east wind – very cold and draughty and hardly fit for women and children to stay in, some of the women well advanced in years and some of the children of tender age. There is, however, an even more cogent reason for our request. The strain of the long internment of the greater number of us is having a very adverse effect on the health of our families and ourselves.'

Dr Maurice Craig examined de László after three months internment and noted: "I saw this patient on the 4 Feb'y 1918. I find him in a restless condition; he is evidently getting loss of power of concentration, sleep is becoming defective; his circulation is bad; the pulse is slow and low-tensioned, and he is losing weight. The strain of the last few months has evidently told & is telling on him, and if this restlessness continues, there is a grave danger of his having a mental breakdown."²

To de László's great relief, he once again had access to his artistic materials in Islington and drew or painted in watercolour some twenty-one works in the six-month period he was there [see Cat. 25]. Kittel, seen here with chin resting in his hand and Braune opposite, were both German by birth and a friendship developed between the three men. They posed for portrait drawings which de László kept for the rest of his life as a reminder of their friendship in this dark period. After the war, he had reproductions made and presented them to Kittel and Braune.

Kittel was owner of Kittel & Company Ltd. at 5 Fenchurch Street, London, which traded primarily in iron, steel and coal. He settled in England in the early 1880s and became naturalised in 1889. His friendship with de László continues between their families to the present day.

Lucy identified Braune in a letter to her son Paul on January 1918: "I saw Daddy yesterday. He was looking better, there is no chance yet of his getting free yet. He plays chess every day with a young lawyer, who comes to his room at about 7 o'clock."³ De László inscribed the drawing he kept of him smoking a pipe "my chess master." Braune's London practice covered commercial, family law and conveyancing and, like so many foreign nationals, he lost his livelihood at the outbreak of the war. His wife supported the family by teaching the violin and playing in cinemas.

De László remained interned at Islington until he suffered a complete physical and mental breakdown and was hospitalised and then moved to a nursing home on 14 May 1918.

Selected Bibliography:

- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 161, ill. 90
- Hart-Davis & Somfalvi 2019, ill. 115

¹ DLA128-0014, letter from prisoners of D Block, Camp for Interned Enemy Aliens, to the Home Office, 28 December 1917.

² DLA169-0078, Maurice Craig, M. D., Report re Mr. P. A. de Laszlo, 4 February 1918.

³ DLA123-0216, letter from Lucy de László to Paul de Laszlo, 31 January 1918.



25
The Lamentation of Christ

1917

Pencil and watercolour on paper, 31.8 x 46.9 cm (12 ½ x 18 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *During my captivity Islington. 1917. Nov. 29. / P.A. de László*

Private Collection

De László turned to religion during his internment, finding parallels between the life of Christ and his own suffering. He felt very strongly that he was innocent: "I am in God's hands & take the fate as it comes – with the golden feeling that I said nothing wrong against my adopted country. I hope to Almighty freedom will be granted to me for Xmas and be together with our dear children."¹ Though he converted to Catholicism as a young man, his faith was not tied to the symbolism of the church. Lucy wrote to the artist's lawyer Sir Charles Russell that "In reality my husband is no great believer either in priests or clergymen the outward form of religion matters to him little, but he is a reader of & believer in the Bible & Teachings of Christ."²

Separation from family and loss of his ability to work resulted in a new appreciation for the life and career de László had built: "In the restless past I scarcely ever had the opportunity to pass so much time in meditation as I do now. It is a great help to me. Only now do I realize how much the Almighty has granted me. In my adversity and solitude I have learnt to understand much. It is a warning for the future to live more wisely, and to appreciate what I possess in love and gifts."³

The artist's wife Lucy heroically pursued her husband's innocence and met with those in authority to secure his release. She too saw the injustice of his position and suffered as she saw her husband attacked by the press and in the House of Commons, similarly drawing parallels with Christ: "That awful Cave – he's a coward & a slanderer. He has crucified P. in the face of the world on unproved evidence."⁴

During his internment de László drew or painted more religious subjects than at any other time in his career. While in Brixton Prison he had only a small paper bound notebook which he filled with quotations from Galatians 5:24 and Matthew 6:33 and small studies of the Lamentation. He had only a pencil for the seven weeks he was there and it was not until he moved to Islington that he had access to watercolours. For a drawing made in the internment camp at Upper Holloway, see [Cat. 24].

¹ Lucy de László, 1917 diary, 'Notes for 1917'.

² DLA166-0018, letter from Lucy de László to Sir Charles Russell, 10 September 1918.

³ Philip de László, 1918 diary, 6 August entry, quoted in Rutter 1939, p. 332.

⁴ Lucy de László, 1918 diary, 6 October entry. Sir George Cave was Home Secretary under David Lloyd George from 1916 to 1919.

26

Patrick David de Laszlo

1918

Oil on board, 25.4 x 14 cm (10 x 5 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *Patrick / 1918 May 20 / P A de László*

Private Collection

De László was not permitted to paint in oil while in Brixton Prison and the internment camp in Upper Holloway, and this portrait of his nine-year-old son Patrick was the first since his arrest. He was secretly moved to a nursing home at 20 Ladbrooke Gardens to avoid drawing the attention of the press which had continued to write vitriolically about his case. In his diary the artist wrote:

After I had been there three days, enjoying the lovely grounds, the quiet garden and listening to the birds, I had, for the first time for nine months, the pleasure of holding the dear palette in my hand again and with great delight I started a sketch of my son Patrick before he left home to enter Twyford School. It was wonderful to be surrounded by my old friends the colour tubes and brushes after so long. It was a lovely day, with just the light I wanted, and I painted from three o'clock until seven, with a short interval for tea. I forgot myself in my work and finished the portrait. I am happy about it and shall treasure it as my first painting after my arrest. So long as I had my dear palette and my brushes in my hands I felt young, as I always do, but after I had finished my strength gave way and I collapsed.¹

This was a period of great upheaval and uncertainty for the family regarding the artist's fate and may have led to Lucy's decision to send Patrick to boarding school at a much younger age than his elder brothers. Paul was also a student there and Lucy was able to visit and provide the two boys moments of normalcy as she recorded in her diary on 18 June:

Returned at 12.20 from visiting Paul & Pat at Twyford on Sunday ... This was my first visit to Pat, as a schoolboy, he was v. perky. They looked like twins awaiting me on the avenue! Dear Pauli so affectionate, kissing me many times in the afternoon till Pat complained, there were no kisses left for him! We pic-nicked on the cricket grounds – chicken, ham & turn-overs & strawberries – so we did well! Afterwards walked over the downs & talked.²

The artist's internment affected their sons' education as parents of other children objected to their attendance. Eton College, for whom de László had painted a portrait of Field Marshal Lord Roberts in 1911, refused to admit Stephen and Paul even though their names had been down for a number of years. The Headmaster at Rugby wrote to Lucy that he was concerned about Stephen's attendance at the school but relented. In contrast, Reverend Charles Wickham, headmaster of Twyford School, welcomed Paul and Patrick and de László painted his portrait in thanks for his support of the children.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death

Exhibited:

- Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 78
- BADA Art & Antiques Fair, London, *Philip de László: 150th Anniversary Exhibition*, 20–26 March 2019, no. 6

Selected Bibliography:

- Rutter 1939, p. 330
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, pp. 143, 150–151, ill. p. 150
- National Portrait Gallery 2010, p. 8
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, pp. 166–167, ill. 92
- BADA 2019, p. 36, ill. p. 37

¹ Rutter 1939, p. 330.

² Lucy de László, 1918 diary, 18 June entry.



27

John Adolphus de Laszlo

1918

Oil on board, 36 x 30 cm (14 ¼ x 11 ¾ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *Johnny's portrait / 1918 Nov. 11 / Finished on the day the war ended*Inscribed verso: *This is our youngest son's portrait. Johnny 1918 Nov 11 Nursing Home / The sun shines in his glory and the Peace of a new day is born to the world*

Private Collection

From May 1918 de László was kept under house arrest at Ladbrooke Grove nursing home and here he painted a number of portraits of his family, including a remarkable portrait of John with a goldfish bowl. Lucy noted in her diary that: "He has been painting & drawing him [John] continually. It's a good thing, it helps to take him out of himself."¹ Of his son, de László wrote: "Dear little affectionate Johnny sat so well. I think he knows I am suffering, that something is wrong with me. In the way he greets me and says goodbye he expresses his love."²

This portrait was painted on Armistice Day, 11 November 1918, signalling the end of the First World War. In his diary de László wrote:

The 11th of November. At eleven o'clock, when walking in the garden, in which I have now spent so many unhappy hours, I suddenly heard guns firing, and shouting. The armistice was signed, the greatest event in world history – and I had to witness

it in the most humiliating circumstances. Dearest Johnny came at 11.30. His cheerful face is like sunshine to me. Looking out of the window at the flags on the houses he asked me in his innocence, 'Daddy, is the Hungarian flag there too?'

The inscription verso reads: "*This is our youngest son's portrait. Johnny 1918 Nov 11 Nursing Home / The sun shines in his glory and the Peace of a new day is born to the world*" revealing de László's hope that the unimaginable hardships experienced by himself and millions of others would soon come to an end. At the time he could not have imagined that his liberty would not be restored until his case was brought before the Naturalisation Revocation Committee in June 1919.

Provenance:

Marcell László, the artist's brother;
By descent from his second wife

¹ Lucy de László, 1918 Diary, 2 November entry.

² Extracts from de László's 1918 diary published in Rutter 1939, pp. 331-332.

³ Rutter, p. 332.



28

A Japanese Doll and a Bunch of Grapes on a Silver Dish

1919

Oil on canvasboard, 50.6 x 40.6 cm (20 x 16 in.)

Inscribed lower right: *László / 1919. I 3.*Inscribed verso: *painted at Littleworth Corner Burnham Bucks / in Sir Charles Russell's charming Queen Ann place – / united with our boys – / after having been separated / from them during the last three holidays - / PAde L.*

Private Collection

De László painted a number of still life compositions while interned during the First World War. The doll in the painting also appears in a portrait of his son John, painted in June and July 1918, while the artist was in a nursing home at Ladbroke Gardens. He was sent there after suffering a nervous breakdown during his imprisonment at the internment camp in Upper Holloway. This still life was painted in early January 1919, the year the artist finally regained his liberty after his exoneration at the Naturalisation Revocation Committee hearing at the end of June.

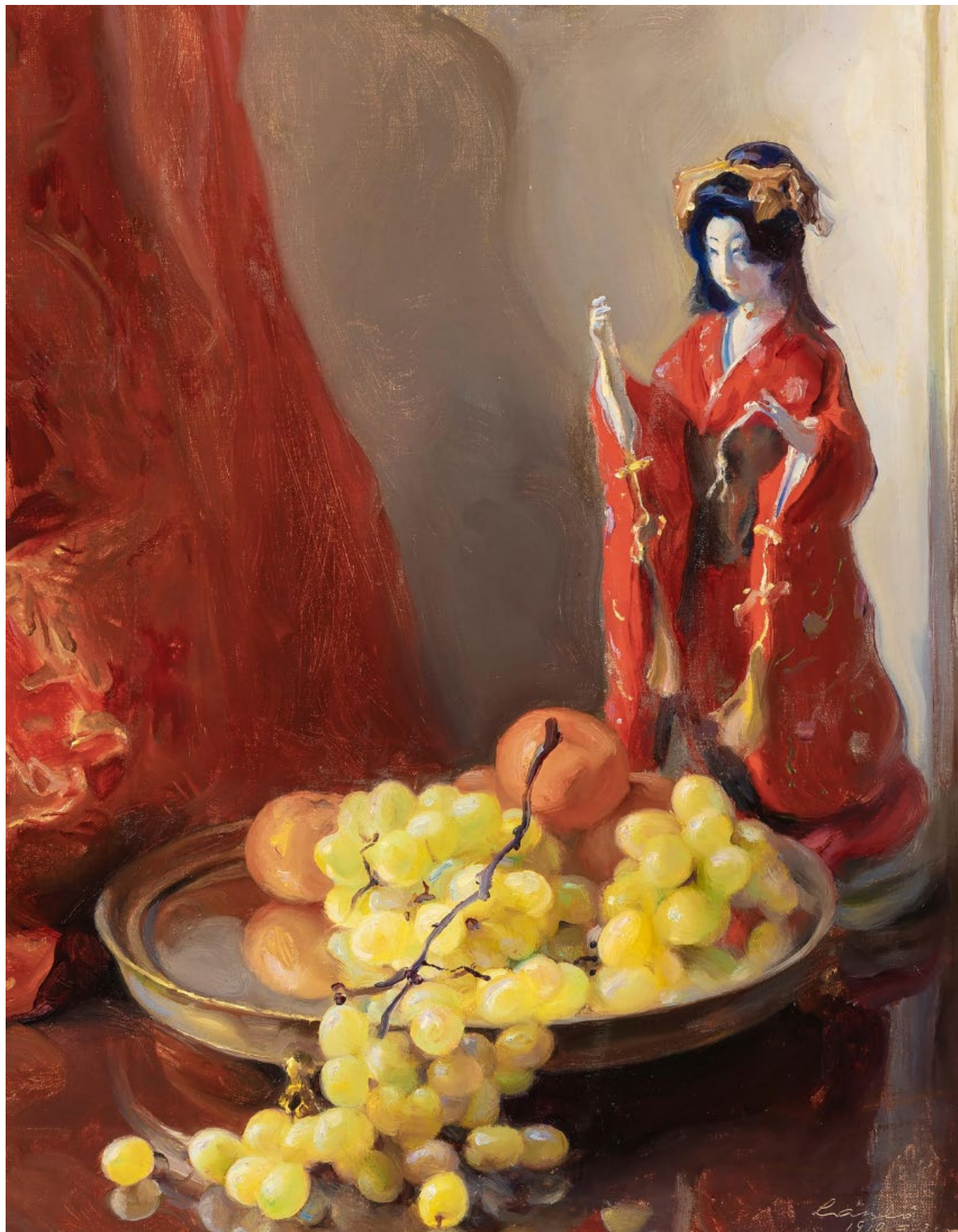
The doll was given to the artist's wife Lucy in 1908 by First Lady Mrs Theodore Roosevelt during their visit to Washington D.C. De László had been commissioned to paint President Roosevelt by their mutual friend Arthur Lee, Lord Lee of Fareham. He recalled the gift in his autobiography, describing the doll as Chinese rather than Japanese:

In the next room was a large quantity of presents laid out on a table: Chinese brocades, silks, and pieces of lacquer. This in itself I should have liked to have painted as a still-life, in an orgy of colours. Here Mrs Roosevelt received the Ambassador. Among the presents was a group of figures representing the late Empress of China and the members of her Court. They were some twelve inches high, and of the most delicate workmanship, their dresses of beautiful materials, correct in every detail, with their badges of rank, their heads and hands enamelled and movable. This present had been brought specially for Mrs Roosevelt, and each figure had, on its stand, an inscription to her. The day before we left, Mrs Roosevelt had the gracious thought of inviting my wife to choose one of these figures as a souvenir.¹

A note written by de László on the doll's base confirms its ethnicity: "This Japanese doll – was a gift by the Empress of Japan to Mrs Th. Roosevelt, one of a group of Imp: court presents & given to Lucy at the White House when painting the portrait in 1908."²

¹ Rutter 1939, p. 254.

² De László is referring to his portrait of Theodore Roosevelt.





29

Littleworth Corner in the Snow from the Garden

1919

Oil on canvasboard, 39.4 x 49.6 cm (15 ½ x 19 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *To our kind host / Sir Charles Russell / a grateful souvenir / 1919. I P. de László*

Private Collection

Littleworth Corner in Buckinghamshire was the country home of Sir Charles Russell, de László's solicitor during his internment and subsequent National Revocation Committee hearing. He negotiated de László's release from the nursing home in Ladbroke Gardens and gave him a home at Littleworth Corner. The artist lived there under house arrest with his wife and five sons until his trial. They moved in on 18 December 1918, just in time for their first Christmas together for two years following a fifteen-month separation.

In her 1918 diary Lucy de László extensively documented the move:

"I was suddenly called by phone to come at once to Sir C. this mg... Sir C. sd he had heard that the H.O. [Home Office] wd be inclined to consider our taking a house & having a nurse in attendance! Ld Devonport [Cat. 19] had recd letter from you (me) which evi. he had taken to the H.O. & Cave had allowed sub: to the consideration of his advisory C. to allow us to have a house. Then Sir C. offered me his cottage at Taplow!! I was del: On my suggesting we cannot accept his offer for nothing: he wd not hear of taking a penny for it."

Lucy travelled to see the house on Sunday 15 December and Sir Charles met her there: "I caught the 11. train for Taplow. A taxi met me & I drove about 5 miles to the Cottage – is ideal – a cottage to begin with, Sir C. has added on to it, & it is full of unexpected pleasantness & charmingly furnished. He showed me all over the house & we went a long walk on the fields, & into Burnham Beeches.

So, it is here, we hope to spend Xmas – P. will love the place – he is getting so restless to leave – no wonder. I'll be glad when these homeless & horrid times end – I badly need to go right away & have a quiet time in quite a different atmosphere – to right & adjust my mind."²

The artist's relief at being able to live with his family again was palpable:

*"Good Sir Charles we are very grateful that he has let us have his own home. It is a lovely little house, in Queen Anne style, furnished with every convenience, and it could not be more charming than it is. The butler is a nice old fellow, and has been in Sir Charles's service many years; his wife is a good cook and their daughter acts as kitchen maid. Everything is at our disposal, even silver and linen, and I hope to spend many happy days here and to do some good work."*³

The pictures painted by the artist at Littleworth Corner are among the most creative of his career both in technique and subject. Freed from the demands of portrait commissions he was now painting for pure enjoyment and exploring light and colour as seen in his portraits of Lucy and their children [Cat. 34].

Provenance:

Presented to Sir Charles Russell by the artist, January 1919;

By descent

¹ Lucy de László, 1918 diary, 11 December entry.

² Lucy de László, 1918 diary, 15 December entry.

³ Rutter 1939, p. 334.

FAMILY LIFE

It was love at first sight on 25 February 1892 when twenty-two-year-old Philip de László met a young flame-haired Irish girl called Lucy Madeleine Guinness at a Hungarian student ball in Munich. Her family were resolute in their view that this was a wholly inappropriate match for their daughter and Lucy's mother described him as "a most fascinating but dangerous man." Their reticence spurred the artist on to become one of the most successful painters in Europe with a grand studio villa near Budapest's City Park. Patience was required for it was eight years until they were permitted to marry in June 1900 at St Brigid's, a small Protestant church near her family home at Burton Hall in Stillorgan, south Dublin.

Seventeen years later the artist began to dictate his memoirs to Lucy:

He talked of das Schicksal [destiny] of how he ^d not "entgehen" [escape] to marry me. I was always there, I cropped up when he came to a certain pitch with anyone & I kept him from going further – but so much was against me – especially when he saw & had marriage settlement talk with my brothers. Well his great devotion won me as I told him & I feel a proud woman – his is an honourable & faithful soul. He lived so long with the idea of me & the disappoints experienced from my people were so great – considering he could have married others in plenty, in much higher positions than me.²

It was not always an easy marriage for Lucy but her strength of character shines through in her letters and diaries as she managed the volatile artistic temperament of her husband and her energetic brood of five boys all born within a twelve-year period. Henry, the eldest, was born in Budapest, Stephen and Paul in Vienna and Patrick and John in England.³

Life was full and adventurous for Lucy, and for the boys as they grew older, as she often travelled with her husband meeting royalty, heads of state, artists and numerous celebrities of the day. They visited America, Jerusalem, Tunisia and much of Europe. Their travels are discussed further in this catalogue in *Painting for Pleasure*.

Success weighed heavily on the artist. Never satisfied, he continually strove to work harder and achieve greater heights. His family helped to bring balance to his life and constantly reminded him of an underlying goal: "My son is growing nicely and he makes me happy – he is running about on his own all day, and he is beginning to babble. The presence of this dear child helps me when I ponder over how much tiring work goes with my brilliant career, how many shadows accompany it."⁴

An undated article from *The Evening News* describes the joy and difficulty in painting children:

The expression of a child in the bud of life, an example of which is my portrait of two delightful boys. Although it is often more of a strain, and more complicated and difficult, to reproduce such expressions – for one is unable to keep some children quiet for any length of time – it is attractive listening to their talk, to try and get something of their innocent pleasures and their thoughts represented in a portrait.⁵

The artist's family portraits are among his best and most creative compositions. Free from the demands of patrons, he captured his wife and sons at moments and in poses that inspired him while in their domestic surroundings. It is not surprising that these pictures have remained almost exclusively in family collections.

1 Rutter 2019, p. 163.

2 Lucy de László, 1917 diary, 18 March entry.

3 The sons of the artist did not use the accents on their surname.

4 DLA0131-0003, letter from de László to Marcell László, 22 August 1902.

5 DLA113-0003, Philip de László, 'Painting a King', *The Evening News*, undated.

FAMILY TREE



ADOLF LAUB
(died 1904)



JOHANNA, NÉE
JANKA GOLDREICH
(died 1915)



HENRY GUINNESS
(1829-1893)



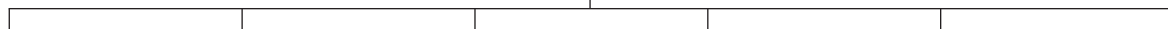
EMELINA BROWN
(1829-1906)



PHILIP DE LÁSZLÓ,
NÉ FÜLÖP LAUB
(1869-1937)



LUCY MADELEINE
GUINNESS
(1870-1950)



HENRY GUINNESS
(1901-1967)



EVA JOHANNA
(1903-1903)



STEPHEN PHILIP
(1904-1939)



PAUL LEONARDO
(1906-1983)



PATRICK DAVID
(1909-1980)



JOHN ADOLPHUS
(1912-1990)

30

Philip Alexius de László

1925

Oil on canvas, 73.7 x 56.5 cm (29 x 22 ¼ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László / 1925*

Private Collection

The 6th Duke of Portland was one of de László's most important British patrons and the artist painted some twenty portraits of the Cavendish-Bentinck family between 1911 and 1937. He was a regular guest at Welbeck Abbey, the family seat in Nottinghamshire where the Duke created a "László Room" and hung many of these portraits.

This portrait is recorded in the artist's Studio Inventory made after his death as *A study for the self portrait at Welbeck*. De László presented the self-portrait as a gift to his patron and the Duke recorded in his memoirs: "De László has always been very kind to us and I much value his friendship...In order to make it complete [the László room] he painted a very excellent picture of himself, which he gave to me, and for which I am most grateful. It now hangs there, crowning his other works."¹

The Duke also noted that John Singer Sargent and de László painted their pictures in the Swan Drawing Room where they admired the portrait of Lord Richard Cavendish by Sir Joshua Reynolds. A particular treasure Lucy referred to on their stay at Welbeck in 1916 was connected to another artistic hero, Sir Anthony Van Dyck: "afterwards I was sent for by Philip to come to the Library to see the original letter wh: the Duke of Newcastle wrote to Van Dyke about his portrait. I had seen a photo of this letter before when the Duke wrote a similar one to Philip about the portrait of the Duchess – The Duke was there showing me the letter & asked Mrs Golding to read it to me."²

In 1925 de László painted one of his most successful portraits of the Duchess of Portland wearing the Portland Tiara which Cartier made for the Coronation of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in 1902 [see Geoffrey Munn's essay in this catalogue].

Provenance:

Given by the artist to the 6th Duke of Portland;
Lady Anne Cavendish-Bentinck;
Given to John de Laszlo, fifth son of the artist and godson of the 6th Duke

Exhibited:

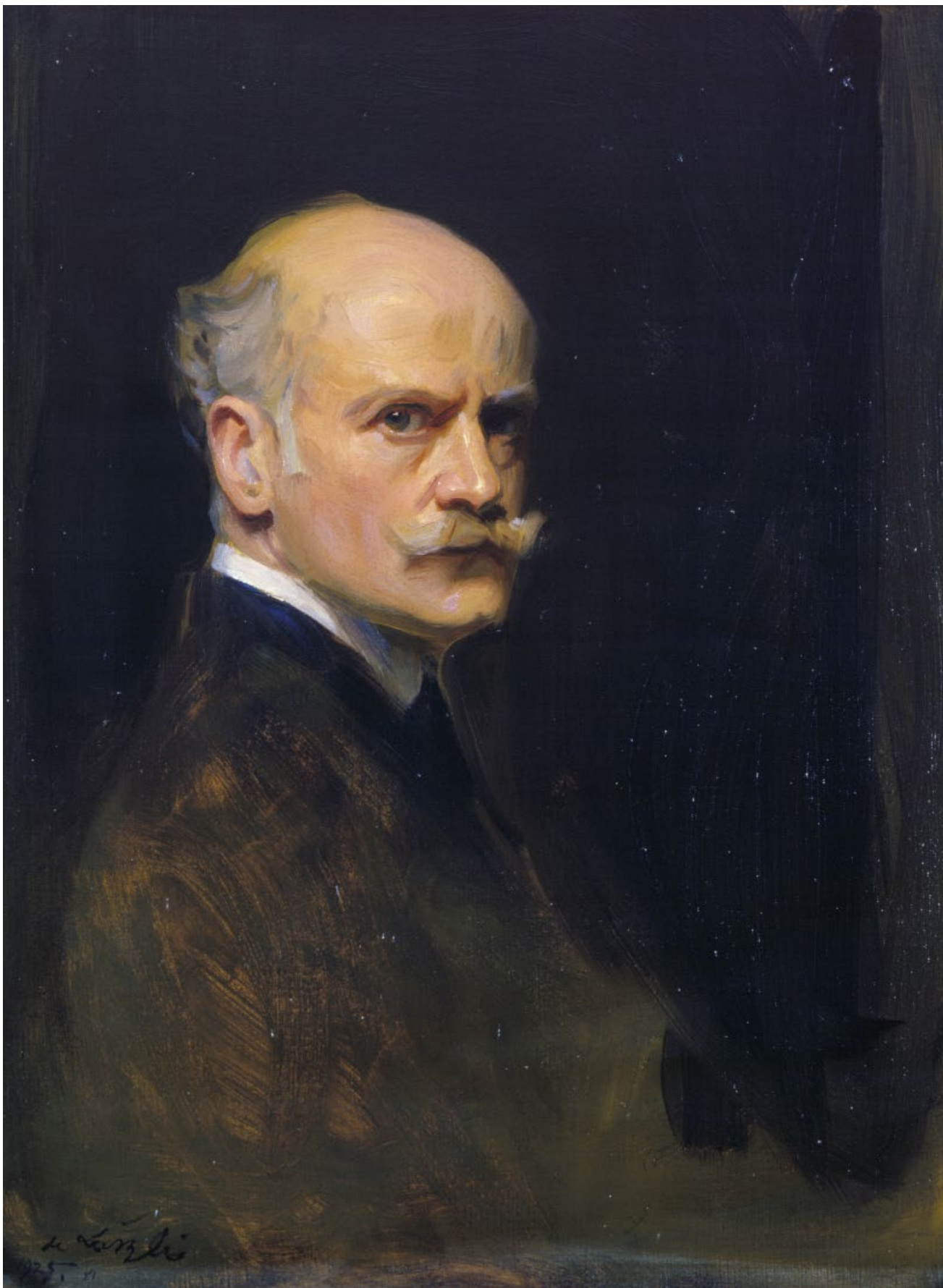
- Museum Van Loon, Amsterdam, *De László in Holland, Dutch Masterpieces by Philip Alexius de László (1869-1937)*, 3 March–5 June 2006
- The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, *A Platinum Jubilee Celebration*, 8 May–5 June 2022

Selected Bibliography:

- Richard W. Goulding, *The Catalogue of Pictures. The Duke of Portland*, Cambridge, 1936, no. 928
- William Cavendish-Bentinck, 6th Duke of Portland, *Men, Women and Things, Memories of the Duke of Portland*, London, 1937, p. 222, ill. between pp. 224–225
- Museum Van Loon 2006, p. 13, ill.
- BADA 2019, ill. back cover

¹ William Cavendish-Bentinck, 6th Duke of Portland, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

² Lucy de László, 1916 diary, 23 July entry.



31

Mrs Philip de László, née Lucy Madeleine Guinness

1918

Oil on canvas, 71.1 x 57.8 cm (28 x 22 ¾ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László / 1918 August.*

Private Collection

De László painted this intimate portrait of his wife while under house arrest at a nursing home in Ladbrooke Gardens, London, during his internment. Their forced separation had been devastating and this portrait reflects the love and joy they felt at being reunited. In his diary, now lost but recorded in part in *Portrait of a Painter*, he wrote on 24 May 1918:

Lucy came to tea, looking very nice in her little black velveteen hat, which I brought her home one early spring day last year... If she feels happy she can look just as she did when I saw her first. We had a nice walk in this lovely garden with its old trees, which have so much to say – it was once the garden of a monastery. As twilight fell we heard some one playing Beethoven. We sat and silently enjoyed the peace of the quiet evening. It was like balsam to our troubled hearts, and we were happy to be alone after so many months' separation.'

The artist was overjoyed to be painting again as his oil paints had been forbidden since September 1917 under the terms of his internment. This is a masterpiece of the artist's oeuvre and shows him revelling in his technical ability and love for painting. Lucy recorded its completion in her diary on 14 August 1918: "Laczi finished my beautiful picture – it is lovely, I never thought he wd be so successful with me. He had to finish my neck and blouse & blue coat & gave my hair a few final fair touches...lightened (grey tone) the background a little. He signed it I looking on – I asked him to put simply "de László" which he did."²

The artist's frequent travels to fulfil commissions left Lucy primarily to raise their five sons. When a lengthy time away was required she would sometimes accompany him. In 1910 they went together to Madrid where the artist painted numerous members of the Spanish Royal Family and she played her violin for them at their

request. Her quiet, steadfast and thoughtful character provided an ideal counterpoint to her husband's volatile temperament with his frequent outbursts and frustration in the pursuit of artistic perfection. Despite this, their marriage was exceptionally strong and Lucy always believed in de László's genius and supported his accomplishments until his death.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death

Exhibited:

- The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, *53rd Autumn Exhibition*, 1925, no. 255
- Paris Salon, Paris, hors concours, 1927, no. 1112
- Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 77
- National Portrait Gallery, London, *Philip de László Portraits*, 27 March–5 September 2010, no. 6
- BADA Art & Antiques Fair, London, *Philip de László: 150th Anniversary Exhibition*, 20–26 March 2019, no. 7
- Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, *Philip de László: "I am an artist of the world..."*, 27 September 2019–5 January 2020, no. 12

Selected Bibliography:

- Clifford 1969, monochrome ill. pl. 35
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, pp. 144–145, ill. p. 144
- National Portrait Gallery 2010, pp. 9–10, ill. pl. 9
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 167
- BADA 2019, p. 39, ill. p. 38
- Hungarian National Gallery 2019, pp. 74, 76, ill. p. 75

¹ Rutter 1939, p. 331.

² Lucy de László, 1918 diary, 14 August entry.





32

Mrs Philip de László and their Pekingese dog Yang in the garden at Littleworth Corner

1928

Oil on board, 32 x 40 cm (12 ¾ x 15 ¾ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *de László*

Private Collection

The family had a series of cheerful Pekingese dogs punctuating their home life between 1908 and 1937. This painting depicts Yang, who also features in surviving film in the artist's archive gambolling about his master wearing court dress in the garden of their home at 3 Fitzjohn's Avenue, London.

Yang also made himself known to a Hungarian journalist writing a feature on the artist in 1927: "I am shown into the garden, where, on a rustic table, tea is laid. 'Mr. de László will be here presently, Sir', and I am left alone with a sweet Pekingese, sniffing at my trousers and then stretching himself on the velvet lawn glaring at me with large wondrous eyes. Suddenly the little dog jumps up and runs frantically towards his master who is coming through a door – evidently the studio."¹

In this peaceful conversation piece, Yang is shown curled up on his cushion next to Lucy on a bench at Littleworth Corner, Buckinghamshire, a place of refuge for the de László family during the First World War. They continued to stay there for many years and considered purchasing it from their solicitor Sir Charles Russell at about this time.

Yang met an accidental and traumatic end, described by Lucy in a letter to her son Paul:

I have some v. sad news to tell you – our dear Yangy died last Saturday. Last week was dreadful...what afterwards proved to be the result of tomaine [sic] poisoning...It's been a dreadful experience – I really thought he w^d pull thro'– he did not have pain, but was just ill & looked dejected. The vet s^d he put up no fight. Henry was v. nice & he & I buried him in the shrubbery ... It was like losing a human being & it makes me v. sad to think of it all & I'm afraid he was v. poorly much longer than I suspected – I know how you will feel it, not seeing your Yang again & Dads too.²

Provenance:

Lucy de László;

Presented to her nephew John du Toit;

Presented to a grandson of the sitter, 2001

Selected Bibliography:

•de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 200, ill.



De László painting this study under the shade of an umbrella in the gardens of Littleworth Corner



Philip, Lucy, Marcsi and Pekingese dog, Fitzjohn's Avenue, c.1930
de Laszlo Archive @ de Laszlo Foundation

¹ DLA110-0078, 'A visit to Philip de László's', *Ujság*, 18 September 1927.

² DLA123-0430, letter from Lucy de László to Paul de Laszlo, 22 January 1930.

33

Henry Guinness de Laszlo

1910

Oil on board, 76.2 x 72.4 cm (30 ¼ x 28 ½ in.)

Indistinctly inscribed lower right: *P A László / Tutzing 1910 Aug*

Private Collection

Between July and September 1910, de László and his young family holidayed in Tutzing, just south-west of Munich on the shores of Lake Starnberg in the shadow of the Alps. They were joined at the Villa Johanna by Lucy's sisters Eva and Grace Guinness. There they met Otto Karl von Kühlmann (1834–1915), lawyer, member of the Bavarian Parliament and General Manager of the Anatolian Railroad whom de László painted at Tutzing in September. They had been introduced through Baroness Ludovica von Stumm, an important early patron of the artist.

Henry, the artist's eldest son, was nine years old when this portrait was painted. De László focuses attention on his son, whose blue eyes are accentuated by the blue of his tie, by placing him against the red geraniums which separate him from the vastness of the mountains and lakes beyond. Henry was also drawn by his father in charcoal leaning on the rail of the balcony gazing out at the magnificent view towards the mountains. As was typical with de László family holidays, the artist also painted portraits of his son Paul and his sister-in-law Grace.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
Stephen de Laszlo, his second son

Selected Bibliography:

- *Meister der Farbe: Europäische Kunst der Gegenwart*, vol. X, Leipzig, 1911, ill.
- *Velhagen und Klasings Monatshefte*, 26th year, issue 7, March 1912, p. 340, ill.



The artist's drawing of Henry inscribed: *Henry / Tutzing 1910 July*



34

Stephen Philip de Laszlo in Spanish Dress in the Garden at Littleworth Corner

1919

Oil on canvas, 50.8 x 39.4 cm (20 x 15 ½ in.)

Private Collection

The 17th-century Spanish painter Diego Velázquez was an influential figure for young artists studying in Paris in the 1880s and 1890s. Carolus-Duran, who taught both de László and John Singer Sargent, was known to extoll: “Velázquez, Velázquez, Velázquez, ceaselessly study Velázquez.”¹ De László had a reproduction of the painter’s self-portrait in his studio, seen there in an early photograph of the artist, suggesting an ambition to follow in the footsteps of his idol. In 1900, his *annus mirabilis*, he was anxious to view Velázquez’s masterpieces in Rome while painting Pope Leo XIII:

We then drove up to the Capitol, where I was anxious to see among the many other treasures in the museum, the self-portrait of Velasquez ... Later during my stay I saw Velasquez’ portrait of Innocent X at the Palazzo Doria, where it hangs alone in a small room. Familiar though it was to me in reproduction, it was a momentous experience to see it there in its powerful colours, with the various textures still so perfect. I was lost in admiration at the treatment of the head, the magnificent simplicity, and the expression of the face. The whole history of the period is manifested in that face, through the character of the sitter, and this, with the technical perfection of the artist, makes the portrait one of the greatest masterpieces in the world.²

In this portrait, the Spanish costume worn by de László’s second son Stephen can also be seen in the portrait of Alfred Lys Baldry in this exhibition [Cat. 17]. It remains in the collection of a descendant of the artist. Stephen is standing in the garden of Littleworth Corner, the Buckinghamshire home of Sir Charles Russell, where the de László family spent the latter part of the artist’s internment. The artist noted in his appointment diary for 1919 that it was painted in January.

Stephen Philip de Laszlo (1904–1938) was born in Vienna, the second of five sons. The artist and his wife brought their young family to live in London in 1907 and Stephen attended Rugby School. He and his younger brother Patrick set up a company called Hivac that developed and made miniature radio valves. It was later sold to Marconi, who continued to supply the valves to the radio industry. The valves became a vital part of portable radio equipment for field transmitters and receivers in the Second World War. In the winter of 1938, a year after his father’s death, Stephen and his wife, Diana von Versen, were killed in a car accident.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death

Exhibited:

- Wildenstein & Co., Ltd., London, *Exhibition of Paintings by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 24 November–22 December 1937, no. 28 [first hang]
- Christie’s, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 86

Selected Bibliography:

- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 150, ill.
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 169, ill. 97
- Hart-Davis & Somfalvi 2019, ill. 122

¹ Hart-Davis 2010, pp. 101–102.

² Rutter 1939, p. 191.





35

Paul David de Laszlo and Patrick Leonardo de Laszlo in Pierrot Costume

1916

Oil on panel, 43.18 x 32.39 cm (17 x 12 ¾ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *Paul and Patrick / Easter 1916 / Melbreck by Daddy*

Private Collection

The family spent April and May 1916 at Melbreck in Tilford, home of Lucy's distant cousin Professor Frederick Trouton. The Trouton and de László families were very close and the artist had painted or drawn their three sons in uniform the previous year. Tragically, two failed to return from the war. This portrait is in stark contrast to current world events with Lucy remarking they "had delightful holidays – glorious weather – every body well – games golf, visitors, music, lessons, readings."¹

Paul and Patrick were the artist's third and fourth sons and their resemblance is striking. The blue Guinness eyes are particularly bright against their pale faces and red hair. They are dressed in classic white Pierrot costumes, which first appeared on the stages of Paris in the late 17th century and were often depicted in paintings and theatricals in England, Italy and France in the 18th and 19th centuries. During the First World War there were many troupes of Pierrots in British regiments for the soldiers' entertainment.² It was also a popular children's costume and the artist painted a portrait of his youngest son John wearing one on 5 May 1916, soon after the present portrait.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
Stephen de Laszlo, his second son



John's portrait inscribed: *Johnny / 1916 / May 5 / PA de L*

¹ Lucy de László, 1916 diary, 8 May entry.

² Imperial War Museum Collections, some examples include: 8th Light Somerset Infantry Light Bobs Pierrot Troupe; The Musical Walads of 1st 6th Essex Regiment; Royal Navy Pierrot Troupe on HMS King George V.

36

John Adolphus de Laszlo

1915

Oil on canvasboard, 50.2 x 40 cm (19 ¾ x 15 ¾ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *Johny. / P. A. de L. / Hammonds Wood. Frensham. / 1915 April.*

Private Collection

This portrait of de László's youngest son recalls child portraiture by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough in the 18th century. They were influenced by new ideas of the inherent goodness of children espoused by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), who argued that childhood was an age of innocence. The portrait is also a successful artistic exercise in deploying white in different textures and tones to capture sunlight across fabric and the glaze of the blue and white ceramic, mirroring the bright blue of the little boy's eyes.

Painted during the early months of the First World War, the portrait contrasted sharply with the disasters of war consuming the press and conversation. The artist was working intensely at the time, and needed to escape to the countryside where he rented a house called Hammondswood in Tilford, Surrey, near the home of Lucy's sister Eva. About an hour by train from London, the location enabled the artist to travel easily to meet his patrons in his studio.

The artist's children enjoyed the freedom of playing in the surrounding countryside away from their more formal life in London. De László joined his family at weekends and took the opportunity to experiment with different styles of painting. As the youngest of five sons and the one most often at home, John became

a favourite subject. There are sixty-eight recorded paintings and drawings of him, nearly thirty more than of his eldest brother Henry.

John's gentle and endearing character was much loved by his parents. He often greeted them with: "I love you Mummy' & again 'I love you with all my little heart' – Oh! What joy it is to hear such feelings."¹ This character trait remained with him throughout his life and his obituary in *The Sunday Telegraph* noted: "The common thread running through his entire life was a capacity for friendship. He was blessed with the ability to put all whom he encountered, close friends and casual contacts alike, into good humour with themselves."²

Provenance:

John de Laszlo;

By descent

Exhibited:

- BADA Art & Antiques Fair, London, *Philip de László: 150th Anniversary Exhibition*, 20–26 March 2019, no. 5

Selected Bibliography:

- BADA 2019, p. 35, ill. p. 34

¹ Lucy de László, 1918 diary, 16 March entry.

² *The Sunday Telegraph*, 27 October 1990.



37

Mrs Philip de László, née Lucy Madeleine Guinness, and her youngest son John

1914

Oil on board, 66.7 x 56.5 cm (26 ¼ x 22 ¾ in.)

Private Collection

John was much loved by his parents for his engaging character and sweet looks. Lucy described him a few months after this portrait was painted: "...John is so handsome – comes down every mg: b-fast time to have a ride on motor – is so good-humoured & clever...can nearly go alone on the motor, he has worried to work the pedals, altho his feet hardly reach them. He can go upstairs without holding on now."¹

The soft toy four-year-old John is holding is most probably Peter Rabbit and one of the toys Lucy brought home for her sons from Paris on 18 June 1914.² Beatrix Potter registered the design at the Patent Office in London on 28 December 1903 but failed to find a British manufacturer. She was incensed when she discovered that German toy company Steiff produced an unauthorised version of the rabbit in a blue velvet jacket and red leather shoes but was unable to stop production.

Lucy's 29 June 1914 diary entry noted the portrait was in the studio when de László welcomed three royal visitors to West House on Campden Hill, Kensington. That spring de László had spent nearly two months in Athens painting the Greek Royal Family and Dowager Queen Alexandra, Consort of Edward VII, wanted to see the portraits of her brother King George I of Greece and her Greek relations. She attended with her sister Maria Feodorovna, Dowager

Empress of Russia, and her sister-in-law Olga, Queen-Mother of Greece, née Grand Duchess of Russia. Of Queen Olga Lucy wrote: "She greatly liked my picture with John looked again & again at it & asked for a photo of it when finished."³ All three visitors signed the artist's Sitters' Book, which the artist bequeathed to the British Library: "...they all 3 were so easy & on leaving P. gave each a bouquet. They first wrote their names in his book – Alex: asked P. where is my husband's name – on showing it, she drew her hand over it & said "poor Edward."⁴

This portrait was exhibited at the artist's retrospective held at the Charpentier Gallery in Paris in 1931, one of his largest and most important shows which included many of his greatest works from across his career.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
John de Laszlo, his youngest son

Exhibited:

•Hôtel Jean Charpentier, Paris, *Exposition P. A. de László*, June 1931, no. 97

¹ Lucy de László, 1915 diary, 29 March entry.

² Lucy de László, 1914 diary, 18 June entry.

³ Lucy de László, 1914 diary, 29 June entry.

⁴ *Ibid.*



38

Eva Frances Guinness

1902

Dark sepia chalk on paper, 47.3 x 34.3 cm (18 5/8 x 13 1/2 in.)

Inscribed lower right: *László F.E. / 1902 / VII.*

Private Collection

This portrait drawing of de László's sister-in-law Eva Guinness by the glow of candlelight mirrors the stormy atmosphere of the holiday the artist took with friends and family in Brittany in summer 1902. Lucy recorded difficulties in their early years of marriage with great honesty: "I must still more rigidly act up to the fact, of clearing our daily path of all irritations to him. As to my way of spending our holiday it has been v. unsatisfactory. When F. is present, my time for the most part is not my own – everything seems to go with the current of what he wants to do, & of course I can't be happy if he is not."¹

De László made many intimate portrait drawings of those closest to him which were very different from the quick studies he made as preparatory works for commissioned portraits. He wrote:

Drawing often interests me much more than painting. It is so much more difficult and serious – to study the form of the face, to take the most characteristic features, and to bring out the expression with a pencil. All this is much simpler when painting in colour, for in colour the likeness is easier to attain, and by aiming at securing the atmosphere and values, one is inclined to neglect the actual drawing. In brushwork treatment one is inclined to work for the general impression, while drawing is reduced to lines in one colour – the black or red pencil, or chalk – which is far more difficult, since it requires still more knowledge and understanding.²

Eva was just two years older than her sister and provided constant caring and support for Lucy and family until her death in 1930. The children were especially close to her and stayed at The Willows, her home in Tilford, Surrey, during their parents' frequent absences from home. The atmosphere there was happy and informal, unlike their structured life in London. Eva was buried at Tilford churchyard and Lucy recorded de László saying: "He told me he wants to be cremated + buried beside Eva, as he can't be buried beside his Mother."³ This is indicative of the importance he attached to her presence in their lives.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death

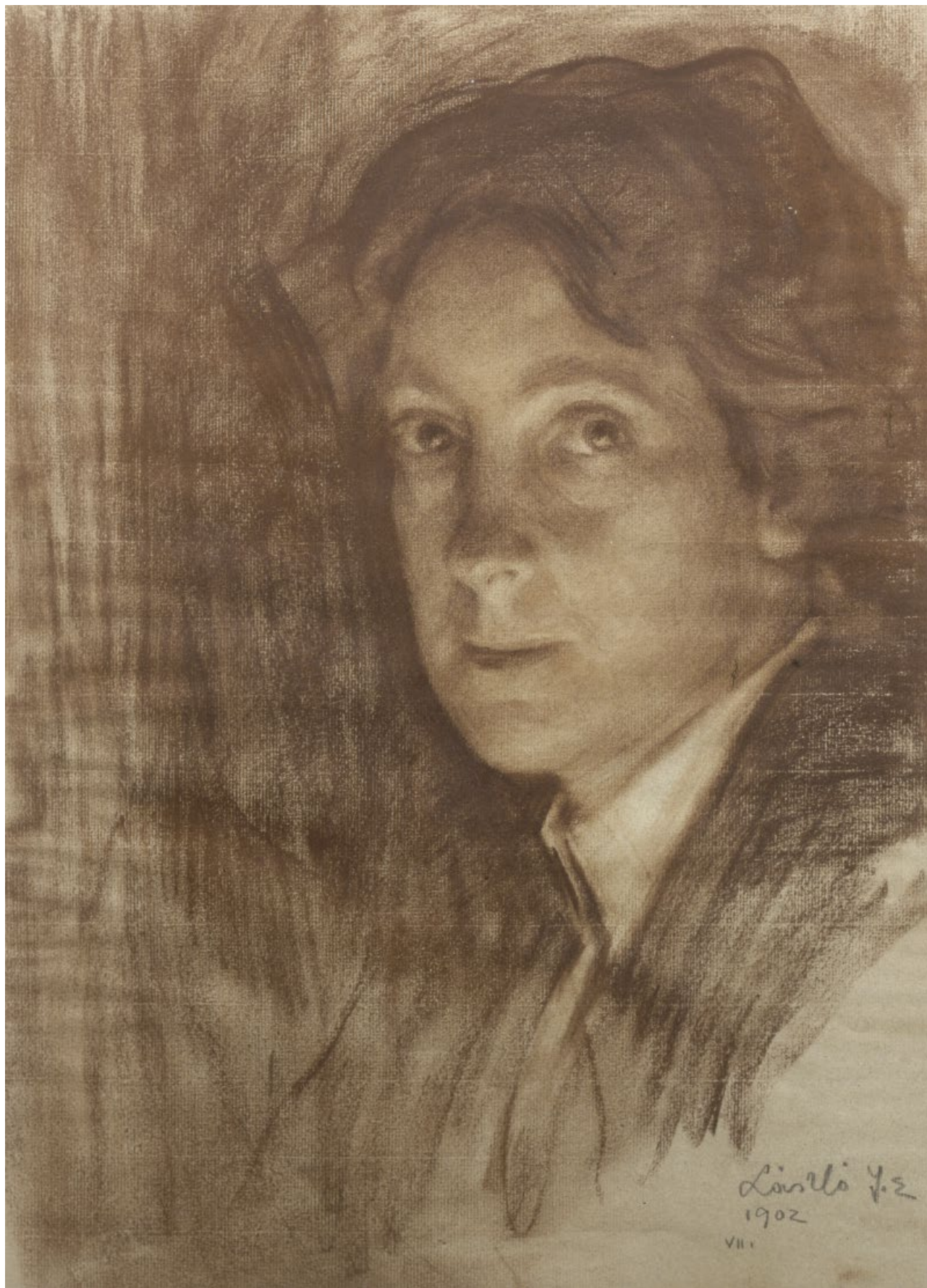
Selected Bibliography:

- Schleinitz 1913, p. 46, ill.
- BADA 2019, p. 30, ill.

¹ Lucy de László, 1902 diary, 9 September entry.

² Rutter 1939, p. 330.

³ Lucy de László, 1918 diary, 9 December entry. The artist's mother died in Budapest in 1915.



PAINTING FOR PLEASURE

De László worked compulsively and relentlessly for most of his fifty-year career, particularly after internment and denial of his ability to earn a living during the First World War. The artist's output and travel for commissions increased as he re-established his reputation and sought to recover lost income. The significant rise in income tax after the First World War added a further burden. After his first heart attack in 1925, de László and Lucy took longer holidays in the winter and summer months. Her diaries are full of descriptions of the places they visited and complement his vivid depictions of the scenery and local people showing his considerable talent as a landscape painter.

The pictures in this section were painted for the simple joy of painting and were a release from the constant demands of patrons and their portraits. De László was an outstanding colourist and his technical facility lent itself to capturing fleeting effects of light on the landscape. Each scene provided a new challenge and fresh excitement. These works complement the artist's better-known portrait painting and capture his energy and constant efforts to improve his art. Critics admired these landscapes as de László exhibited them more often in the 1920s and 1930s as a review of his 1927 French Gallery exhibition in *The Graphic* shows: "Other little-known pictures of the master's brush, as the 'Fruit Seller,' the 'Borghese Gardens' [Cat. 39], modern conceptions in delightful colouring, or a small canvas of the 'Sahara,' with its haunting atmosphere and Japanesque colour harmony, reveal a poet to whose sensitive feeling Nature unveils her deepest secrets."¹

The Sketch made de László the subject of their 'Celebrities in Undress' feature in 1927. Part interview, part biography, it shows the value he placed on his landscape studies as representations of his capabilities as an artist:

Life must be very wonderful to him. At any moment, while the pageant is still passing, while the wine has still its sparkle, before the shadows have begun to fall, he can capture the beauty and personality which comes his way. He showed me a little sketch of Pompeii—some hills, some trees, some clouds. This sketch was painted outside the walls of Pompeii in one hour, Laszlo having just missed his train. That is always happening



Still from archival film depicting de László painting the Bronze Horses of St Mark's in Venice in 1926 with Lucy looking on

to him. He sees a glitter of sunshine on the green horses of St. Mark's, and he can't resist painting a study of it; and presently the aforesaid glitter is being registered on his canvas. He finds himself in the desert towards dusk; and, swiftly though the light fades, it cannot fade too swiftly for his fingers. Indeed, were I in search of a man to paint a flash of lightning, I believe that I should know where to find him.²

His closest friend, the artist and critic Alfred Lys Baldry [Cat. 17], repeatedly encouraged de László to enjoy painting landscapes as a way of relaxing and protecting his health for the future: "Lucy was quite right in wanting you to be lazy a little longer in Taormina, you were hardly long enough there to get the full benefit of the change from London. But I am afraid it is impossible to teach you the art of idling judiciously; yet it is an important and valuable art and one very well worth cultivating; it is only by idling properly and at the proper time that you can keep yourself fit for your work and avoid the risk of a breakdown."³

In 1923 de László wrote: "I feel regretful that I have not painted more landscapes in the past. It seems to me there is only one right method of landscape painting—to paint a résumé of Nature, and to try to do it in one sitting, and a larger picture in not more than three."⁴ This realisation acted as a catalyst and resulted in a marked increase in the number of landscapes he painted. The distances the artist travelled for work and pleasure were vast and continuous; in 1927 alone, he spent extended periods at the Spanish Court in Madrid and with the Regent of Hungary in Budapest. He went to America five times in his career as it was an important source of income, but it was strenuous too, requiring as much as three or four months away from home at a time.

Many of these landscape sketches remained in the artist's personal collection and are recorded in the Studio Inventory made after his death in November 1937. Twenty-four of the sixty works exhibited at the Wildenstein exhibition, which opened two days after his death, were landscapes, interiors or local people he met in Rome, Sorrentino, Marrakesh, Algeria or Egypt. Since then, these paintings have not been widely shown and this exhibition presents a fresh opportunity to consider them as a distinct part of the artist's oeuvre.



Philip de László sketching in the Roman ruins of old Carthage, 1923

1 F.L.L. [Ferdinand L. Leipnik], 'Art in the Making', *The Graphic*, 24 January 1925, p. 122.

2 Beverley Nichols, 'Celebrities in Undress: XLIII. — Laszlo', *The Sketch*, 19 January 1927, p. 112.

3 DLA020-0038, letter from Alfred Lys Baldry to de László, 14 March 1933.

4 De László quoted in Rutter, p. 348.

39

The Fountain of Aesculapius in the Gardens of the Villa Borghese, Rome

1923

Oil on canvasboard, 54.6 x 45.7 cm (21 ½ x 18 in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László Rome / 1923*

Private Collection

De László and his wife Lucy enjoyed a holiday in Algeria in late February 1923, their first since the end of the First World War. While there the artist received news from Rome that Benito Mussolini had agreed to sit for a portrait. He had been elected Italy's youngest ever Prime Minister the previous year. The wife of his Private Secretary, Baroness Russo, helped persuade him to give de László the commission to paint his first portrait from life.

De László described his impressions of the sitter for *The Weekly Dispatch*: "When he speaks to you, you feel that an electric current is running through your veins." M. Laszlo said he had seldom worked under greater difficulties. His studio was in the Palazzo Chigi, next to the room where Mussolini worked, but the premier never knew when he would be free, and it was impossible to arrange for definite sittings...Mussolini would stride in for half an hour – a staunch, determined figure – and throw himself into his chair, but even then he was not able to rest."¹

During periods between painting the man who would become 'Il Duce', de László found time to paint the local scenery, including this view of the Fountain of Aesculapius in the extensive gardens of the Borghese. The fountain had long attracted visiting artists and was sketched by J.M.W. Turner during his visit to the city just over a hundred years earlier in 1819.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
Henry de Laszlo, his eldest son;
Patrick de Laszlo, fourth son of the artist;
By descent

Selected Bibliography:

- Clifford 1969, p. 45, ill. pl. X
- BADA 2019, p. 46

¹ 'In the World: Men & Matters', *The Weekly Dispatch*, 22 April 1923, p. 2.





40

Venice, Gondolas, the Customs House and the Giudecca beyond

1926

Oil on board, 20.3 x 25.4 cm (8 x 10 in.)

Inscribed lower right: *de László*

Private Collection

This study is not dated but a letter from the artist's wife to their son Paul, sent from Venice in 1926, suggests it may have been painted at that time. De László made five visits to Venice: in 1889 for a period of study cut short by illness; 1907 when his wife's portrait *Lucy with a Violin* won the Gold Medal at the Venice Biennale; and for holidays in 1923, 1926 and 1930. Lucy describes the atmosphere of the city that inspired many generations of artists:

Venice is too wonderful to express in words. The sun, the water, the gleaming Palazzos, the Church bells, & the warm sun – all is just beautiful! Already Dads looks better & I'm told I look better too, & I certainly feel it ... He has already painted two pictures, one in front of our hotel & the other a view of the Basilica of San Marco. This mg: we spent some time in the Basilica & also walked about on the roof ... In the evgs: San Marco Piazza is just lovely. A band plays & all Venice & the foreigners are walking about or sitting out at the restaurants listening to the splendid band under a deep blue sky.'

While on the roof of San Marco, de László was inspired to paint the *Bronze Horses*, which he gave to the Dundee Art Gallery and Museum. This was captured on film and is in the de Laszlo Archive Trust Film Archive.

De László and Lucy stayed at the Hôtel de l'Europe on the Grand Canal, affording access to the views he painted. A study of a *Venetian Fête at San Marco* is on a panel of the same size suggesting it also dates from this visit.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;

Stephen de Laszlo, his second son;

By descent



The Bronze Horses of St Mark's



Venetian Fête at St Mark's

¹ DLA123-0390, letter from Lucy de László to Paul de Laszlo, 30 August 1926.

41

View from Carisbrooke Castle towards Newport, Isle of Wight

1926

Oil on canvasboard, 40 x 32.1 cm (15 ¾ x 12 ⅝ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László 1926*

Private Collection

From 1913 Carisbrooke Castle was the home of Princess Beatrice (1857–1944), youngest child of Queen Victoria and Governor of the Isle of Wight from 1896 until the end of her life. De László probably first met Princess Beatrice when painting members of the Spanish Royal Family in Madrid in 1910, although he had painted her brother-in-law, Prince Louis of Battenberg (later 1st Marquess of Milford Haven), in 1909.

On 12 August 1926 the artist and Lucy were the guests of Princess Beatrice at Carisbrooke. This was de László's first visit to the Isle of Wight since 1898 when he was invited by the Boston Minot family to Berwick Lodge in Ryde. On that occasion he was consumed with excitement at the thought of meeting Lucy again after six years separation since her father had denied their engagement in 1892. During this visit de László painted two portraits of Princess Beatrice as well as a study of the gardens she created within the castle walls.

This view was painted from the earth ramparts to the exterior of the castle's western defensive wall built by Governor Sir George Carey (1547–1603) during the reign of Elizabeth I. The artist captured the

expansive views seen in all directions from the castle's raised position virtually at the centre of the Island. The spire of St Mary's Church, Carisbrooke, can be seen in the distance.

The mediaeval castle's connection to a poignant moment in English history would have appealed to the artist. Charles I was imprisoned there for fourteen months before his execution in 1649 and his two youngest children were later held there. His daughter, Princess Elizabeth died during her imprisonment in 1650 and is buried in St Thomas's Church, Newport, where she is memorialised in a white marble sculpture by Baron Marochetti (1805–1867).

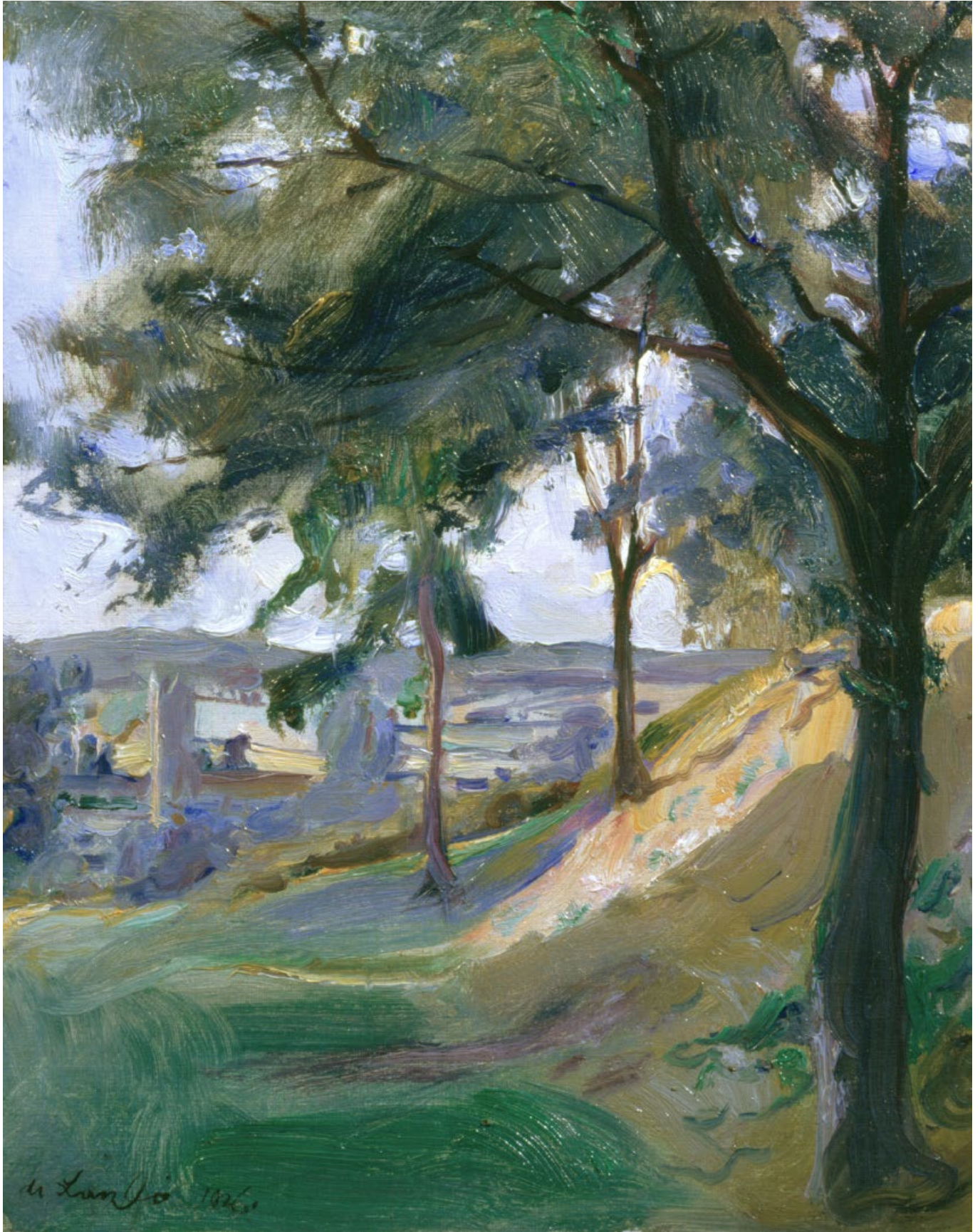
Provenance:

Sold at Christie's, London, 14 July 1967, lot 117;

Private Collection;

Sold at Christie's, South Kensington, 28 September 1987, lot 158;

Private Collection



42

Statue of Diana, Goddess of Hunting, in the Gardens at Versailles

1928

Oil on board, 25.4 x 19.7 cm (10 x 7 ¾ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *de László / 1928. Versailles*

Private Collection

A letter in de László's archive shows that he sought permission to paint at Versailles in 1924 and this was arranged through his friend Léonce Bénédite, curator of the Musée Rodin: "The Director of the Fine Arts Department told me that when you come to Paris, he would give you all the facilities to work at Versailles so that you have the leisure to paint a few impromptu masterpieces."¹

Versailles represented a bittersweet but visually inspirational place for de László. The Palace hosted delegations involved in the Treaty of Versailles, signed by Germany and the Allied Nations on 28 June 1919 and formally ending the First World War. Under the terms of the Treaty the borders of Europe were realigned and Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory.

De László does not appear to have visited Versailles again until 1928 when he and Lucy stayed at Easter and again in October. The palace and grounds inspired him to paint at least five landscape studies and three paintings of the statue of Diana, goddess of hunting. During the visit Lucy recorded in her diary how she and the artist discussed religion and the events of the First World War and the abandonment of the ideals of Christianity.

Lucy recorded this study in her diary on 4 October: "Since I last wrote, have moved to the Trianon Hotel. Réservoirs was horrid, such indifferent service. Have been here about a week, enjoying it so much. Glorious weather & P. has painted 5 pictures of the Park. Lovely Diana is the most lovely & dear Laczi has given it to me – quite by surprise he did this! Have been sitting beside him & reading "Napoleon" & also watching him paint. P. in good humour & enjoying it all so much...One wants to live here to absorb the beauty of the place. The subtle combination of Art & nature."²

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;

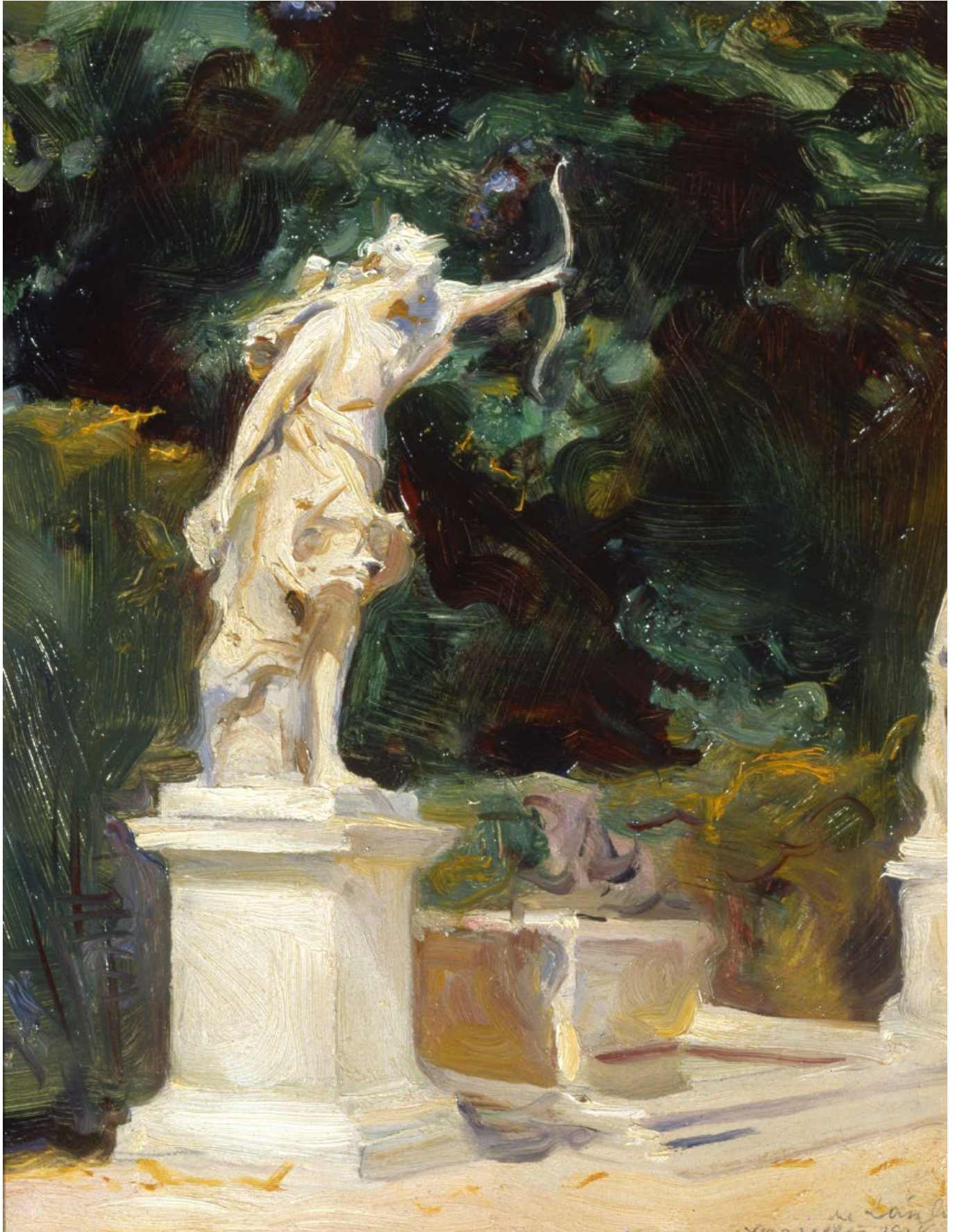
Patrick de Laszlo, his fourth son;

By descent

Exhibited:•Victoria Art Galleries, Dundee, *Exhibition of Recent Portraits and Studies by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, September 1932, no. 64•Wildenstein & Co., Ltd., London, *Exhibition of Paintings by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 24 November–22 December 1937, no. 47

¹ DLA116-0056, letter from Léonce Bénédite to de László, 26 December 1924.

² Lucy de László, 1928 diary, 4 October entry.





43

Court of Rameses II at Luxor Temple

1929

Oil on canvas, 79.4 x 58.4 cm (31 ¼ x 23 in.)

Inscribed lower left: *de László / LUXOR 1929*Inscribed verso: *de Laszlo Luxor Tempel [sic] / 1929 / March / P.A. de László*

Private Collection

A frenzy for Egypt and the Pharaohs was unleashed in 1922 by Egyptologist Howard Carter's discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb in the Valley of the Kings and it became a popular destination for artists and tourists alike.

In January 1929 de László travelled to Cairo to paint King Fuad I of Egypt and his son, Prince Farouk. When these commissions were completed, the artist was joined by his wife Lucy and son Paul and they journeyed along the Nile visiting Karnak, Luxor and Aswan. The de Lászlós immersed themselves in the new experiences the country offered and visited markets and temples, met a tribe of the Bisharin people and made excursions to the Aswan Dam riding camels. Many of these adventures were captured on film using their



De László in his studio with the *Court of Rameses II* and portrait of Lucy [Cat. 31] behind him. To his right are portraits of his son Paul in legal robes, his youngest son John and the Marchioness of Londonderry.

Kodak Ciné-B camera and survive in the de Laszlo Archive Trust Film Archive. The artist was so inspired by Egyptian scenery and people that he painted at least seventeen canvases, see also [Cat.44]. The clarity of light and skies presented new artistic challenges and he revelled in capturing their effects on the bleached stones of the ancient temples and the desert scenery.

Lucy noted how much he was enjoying the experience in her diary: "P. finished his picture of Luxor temple – I watched him making the sun effects more silvery. P. happy painting in the open & quiet. He has painted 4 pictures here...Philip looks so well & is not excited. He has been trying to rest, but has painted morning & evening."¹

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;

By descent

Exhibited:

- Royal West of England Academy, Bristol, *84th Annual Exhibition*, November 1929–February 1930, no. 26
- The Royal Society of British Artists, London, *One Hundred and Seventy-third Exhibition*, Spring 1930, no. 168
- Victoria Art Galleries, Dundee, *Exhibition of Recent Portraits and Studies by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, September 1932, no. 65
- Wildenstein & Co., Ltd., London, *Exhibition of Paintings by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 24 November–22 December 1937, no. 41
- Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 113

Selected Bibliography:

- Rutter 1939, p. 371
- Clifford 1969, p. 57, ill. pl. XIII
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 177, ill.
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 212, ill. 114

¹ Lucy de László, 1929 diary, 15 March entry.



44
A Sailing Boat on the Nile, Aswan

1929

Oil on board, 20.4 x 25.4 cm (8 x 10 in.)

Inscription indistinct

Private Collection



Study of an Egyptian boy with a flower painted at Luxor

Lucy de László's diary records this visit to Egypt in detail and the date and location of her husband's paintings [Cat. 44]. This scene was painted at Aswan: "A perfectly wonderful sunset playing now gold, now glowing red, now pale mauve & blue, played before us – it was amazing. Laczi painted first one effect, then another – an attempt to paint the red wonder in nature failed, all passed so quickly ... the views with boats passing was so quiet & lovely, dreamy. I saw a man casting a net for the first time in my life."¹



Study of the hotel coffee boy at Aswan

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
Stephen de Laszlo, his second son

Exhibited:

Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 115

Selected Bibliography:

Rutter 1939, p. 371

¹ Lucy de László, 1929 diary, 26–27 February entries.



45
The Terrace at the Kaiserhof Hotel, Bad Gastein

1935

Oil on board, 20 x 25 cm (8 x 10 in.)

Private Collection

In March 1935 de László travelled to Budapest, the city of his birth, to paint Admiral Horthy, Regent of Hungary. He was warmly received and stayed at the Ritz in Budapest in the same suite where Edward, Prince of Wales, had stayed a few weeks before. Between March and June the artist painted or drew some twenty-nine portraits, travelling between London and Paris. This punishing schedule took its toll and so between June and September he and Lucy holidayed in Bad Gastein and Grossgmain in the mountains not far from Salzburg.

Lucy wrote to Josephine de Laszlo, wife of her son Paul, from the Kaiserhof hotel on 25 August: "I think I sent you a card from here. Gastein, in fine weather like today, is full of beauty, but we've had it pretty cloudy & even cool. We keep strictly to our cure, & spend much time resting & being what Dads call "stupid" i.e. just doing nothing particular. The fact is, we are pretty tired, the result of the baths & this makes us relax in mind & body really a v. good cure for Dads. The D^r saw at once what his temperament is & ordered him to go quietly & not to take too drastic a cure. He is looking so well, & has practically given up smoking!"¹

De László recorded this landscape study in his diary on 28 August: "...got up early – the blue-rose sky clear – no signe [sic] of a cloud. By 8. ocl we were on our way up on the mountain – reached the chalet by 8 40 where we had our coffee & painted a sketch with the tables – red umbrella & in the background the lilac blue fine tones of the distant mountains. We both were happy & enjoyed it – so glorious so uplifting – inspiring – is this place here. How lovely so high up – to be away from the crowd – we were contented to get away with a souvenir sketch."²

Of the eight landscape studies de László made at Bad Gastein and Grossgmain, most remained in the artist's personal collection and were recorded in the Studio Inventory made after his death in November 1937.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
Stephen de Laszlo, his second son

¹ DLA123-0477, letter from Lucy de László to Mrs Josephine de Laszlo, 25 August 1935.

² Philip de László, June–November 1935 diary, 28 August entry.

46

The Bull from the Grave of Dionysios of Kollytos in the Ancient Cemetery of Kerameikos, Athens

1936

Oil on canvasboard, 50.8 x 40.6 cm (20 x 16 in.)

Inscribed lower right: *de László 1936*

Private Collection

In early 1936 de László travelled to Bucharest to paint portraits of members of the Romanian Royal Family including a posthumous portrait of King Ferdinand, his widow Queen Marie, their son King Carol and his son Prince Michael. Lucy de László joined him there and they travelled to Constantinople and the Holy Land before returning to England via Athens. De László and Queen Marie, née Princess of Edinburgh, met in Vienna in 1899 and his first portrait of her is included in this exhibition [Cat. 6].

The artist described painting this landscape and a study of the Erectheion on the Acropolis on 23 April: “Days are cloudy & sunless – in spite of, painted a sketch of the famous Bull in the ancient cemetery and one of the Erectheion on the Acropolis.”¹ The sculpture of the bull is from the tomb of Dionysios of Kollytos in the ancient cemetery of Kerameikos to the northwest of the Acropolis and dates to c.345–350 B.C. The original is now in the Kerameikos Archaeological Museum and replaced with a modern replica.

This was de László’s first visit to Athens since 1914 when he was invited by King Constantine I to paint portraits of the Greek Royal

Family. The family had been through much turmoil since then, spending eight years in exile until Constantine’s son Prince George succeeded his father as King George II. He welcomed de László and Lucy to Athens and invited them to a private lunch at the Tatoi Palace with his brother Prince Paul. The artist wrote of the King’s interest in his recent visit to Romania.²

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;

John de Laszlo, his youngest son

Exhibited:

•BADA Art & Antiques Fair, London, *Philip de László: 150th Anniversary Exhibition*, 20–26 March 2019, no. 13

Selected Bibliography:

•BADA 2019, pp. 23, 52, ill. p. 53

¹ Philip de László, March–July 1936 diary, 23 April entry.

² *Ibid.* His estranged wife was Princess Elisabeth of Romania, daughter of Queen Marie [Cat 7].





47
The Gardens of the Hotel Timeo, Taormina, Sicily

1933

Oil on canvasboard, 39.4 x 49.5 cm (15 ½ x 19 ½ in.)

Inscribed and indistinctly dated lower right: *de László Taormina 1933*

Inscribed verso: *de László / Taormina / 1933. Spring*

Private Collection

In 1930 de László's friend and amateur artist Vilmos Ruttkay wrote, "you ought to come here [to Taormina], from an artist's point of view this is one of the most beautiful spots in Europe. I see painters with their paint boxes and stools going about the place every day, they come here, from all parts of the Globe!"¹ Three years later de László and Lucy followed his advice and stayed at the Hotel Timeo in Taormina for two weeks in early March 1933. The hotel is still there, nestled into the hills of the east coast of Sicily looking out over the Mediterranean with views of Mount Etna.

De László wrote to Christopher du Toit, husband of Lucy's elder sister Grace, that: "we go down to Taormina for a fortnight, to enjoy a little sunshine away from the world, I from my work and Lucy from her many social and other duties."² Lucy recorded in her diary that the weather was not favourable and the artist only completed a few landscape sketches and one still life during this visit despite the fact he had taken forty blank canvases with him on the holiday.³ From Taormina they went to Rome where he painted the Cardinal's Room at the Vatican and the Pincio Gardens.

This picture was included in de László's last exhibition at the Wildenstein gallery which opened two days after his death. It was also one of those kept by Lucy as a memory of their cherished moments of leisure together.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
Lucy de László;
By descent

Exhibited:

•Wildenstein & Co., Ltd., London, *Exhibition of Paintings by Philip A. de László, M.V.O.*, 24 November–22 December 1937, no. 42

Selected Bibliography:

•Clifford 1969, p. 67, ill. pl. XV

¹ DLA017-0126, letter from Vilmos Ruttkay de Ruttkay to de László, 16 January 1930. De László met Ruttkay in Vienna before the First World War, where he served as Commercial Attaché to the Austro-Hungarian Embassy.

² DLA027-0056, letter from de László to Christopher du Toit, 22 February 1933.

³ DLA020-0098, letter from William Huntley Buist, Lord Provost of Dundee to de László, 13 March 1933:

"I hope you are having a very pleasant time in Sicily, though I hear you took forty canvases with you. It does not seem as if it would be much of a holiday."



48

The Avenue at Bedales

1937

Oil on panel, 31.8 x 39.4 cm (12 ½ x 15 ½ in.)

Private Collection

De László had experienced heart trouble for many years and in August 1936 suffered a severe attack of angina. His doctor, Lord Dawson of Penn, endeavoured to encourage rest although it was not at all in de László's nature. He and Lucy spent the winter in Cap Ferrat and returned to London at Easter 1937 and for the Coronation of King George VI on 12 May in Westminster Abbey.

The decision was made to rent Bedales House near Lingfield, Haywards Heath, for the summer so friends and family and their new grandchildren could visit and the artist could remain quiet away from the demands of patrons in London. However, the artist returned to his portrait commissions with typical zeal, painting the Archbishop of Canterbury Cosmo Lang in his Coronation Robes [Cat. 13], Prince and Princess Chichibu of Japan, and ironically his doctor Lord Dawson.

De László wrote to his closest friend Alfred Lys Baldry [Cat. 17] at the beginning of August: "I have been for the last nine days as the guest of the Duchess of Northumberland. I have painted her in the Zoffany style – a full length portrait in reduced size, with that inspiring and enchanting woman wearing her Coronation Robes and jewels, in which she looks perfect. She did everything to make my time pleasant and comfortable – I was able to take the necessary rest and succeeded in doing the work in eight days. You are laughing, of course, at the way I take my rest! But it would have been very difficult to refuse."¹

Many of his letters at this time reflect on his exhaustion and desire to rest so he could return to work: "I do feel rather tired but now I will

really rest and remain quiet until the end of September. Miss Lees will be here with me and I will spend a few hours daily in dictating my Memoirs. I do hope that you will be able to take a little holiday in our company ... We are having lovely weather and we love this place. It is just perfect and now I try to look after myself."²

At least two other landscapes studies of the Bedales estate are known, one dated September 1937 just weeks before the artist's death on 22 November. The day before he left Bedales he wrote to Sister Mary Columba of the local Convent in Haywards Heath: "To-day, before we leave this beautiful place I am sending this letter to you. We would have loved to stay on here just now for at least another fortnight, when Nature is changing into her beautiful golden garment. I would have loved to sit out and sketch, but if we may be so blessed, we hope to spend next summer here and will then arrange to remain for a longer period."³

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
By descent

Exhibited:

•Christie's, King Street, London, *A Brush with Grandeur*, 6–22 January 2004, no. 136

Selected Bibliography:

•de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, p. 169, ill.

¹ DLA025-0022, letter from de László to Alfred Lys Baldry, 7 August 1937.

² *Ibid.* The memoirs were published in 1939 as *Portrait of a Painter* and completed by Owen Rutter, who had access to the artist's letters and diaries. Many of the originals have now disappeared making it an important record of his life.

³ DLA025-0087, letter from de László to Sister Mary Columba, 28 September 1937.

THE ARTIST'S METHOD



"Pigments mixed with poppy oil to slow the drying process: I like my painting to keep wet as long as possible so that I can finish straight away the part of the picture I am working on before the paint dries." (De László quoted in *Painting a Portrait*)



"I am very anxious to keep my colour always clean, and for a clean touch a clean brush is necessary ... for the sake of purity of colour I avoid, as far as possible mixing more than two colours together at any time."

Art is not an occupation, it is one's second nature and the longing to do daily something better keeps one in constant enthusiasm – Philip de László

De László's artistic method was extensively documented in film, photography and print. The Gaumont-British Picture Corporation filmed the artist in 1927 and showed him progressing a portrait of a mannequin from the couturier Lucile from the initial compositional drawing in his sketchbook to the finished painting on canvas [Cat. 51]. The seven-minute segment is silent. In 1934, at the request of Charles Holme, editor of *The Studio*, he collaborated with art critic Alfred Lys Baldry [Cat. 17] on *Painting a Portrait by de László*. The publication provides a detailed understanding of de László's technique as he described it. Baldry underlines why using such an exemplary artist was instructive:

The artist of high rank is almost invariably an earnest student and sedulous craftsman, consistent in his pursuit of knowledge and assiduous in his striving after the fullest control over executive process – a firm believer in Emerson's dogma "skill to do comes of doing"...It would be difficult to find a better illustration of the working of a serious artistic conscience than is afforded in the career of de László, or of the earnestness with which a greatly gifted artist can approach the problems of his profession.'

De László worked tirelessly throughout his career to develop the technical proficiency to lift his work beyond just a superficial likeness to creating a psychological portrait that also defined the sitter's personality and mannerisms. As he continued to refine his skill his painting became freer and the personalities of his sitters emerged more fully. His ability to present sitters with the best version of themselves without venturing into the artificial was critical to his popularity and success.

De László always painted from life and only used photographs in rare instances when painting a posthumous portrait. He made several of these during the First World War for bereaved parents. Lord Selborne referred to the portrait of his son Robert as "a miracle of consolation."² He also often met sitters for lunch or tea before the first appointment in the studio so he could begin to understand their personality and physicality:

Every human being worth considering, man or woman, has the face which he or she turns to the world, but behind this mask peeps out a jealously-guarded inner ego, embodying hopes and terrors, aspirations and limitations, that go to make up the atmosphere of his or her personality. In the give and take of unguarded conversation this inner ego reveals itself in a sudden flash of the eyes, in the droop of the eyebrows, in the charm of the smile, the pose of the body, or even in the gesture of the hands. There is a certain something that differentiates every human being from his or her fellows. It is the office of the portrait painter to be quick to recognize and to retain this momentary revelation of the inner self, to bring it into harmony and into unison with the surface personality, with the lifelikeness of face and body.'

He used the 'sight size' method with the sitter and canvas placed side by side; the artist steps away to compare the two and back to the canvas to paint what he has observed: "When I stand back I am recording mentally what I am going to put on my canvas when I walk up to it."⁴ He began painting directly on the canvas with no underdrawing as he felt that would restrict his inspiration and the natural progression of the portrait since "there is a danger of losing one's freedom to take in the general effect and of becoming a slave to one's own doings."⁵

The artist found conversation essential for the success of a portrait as it encouraged sitters to be less guarded and act naturally. It also helped to develop his relationship with the sitter: "...whenever I like my sitters it develops [sic] rapidly. I see the picture as if finished in my mind & try to transmit it on the canvas & cannot be quick enough!"⁶ He set up a mirror so sitters could see their portrait coming to life on the canvas. They became so engrossed

in watching the process that they did not tire so quickly and became less self-conscious. Use of a mirror was described by Queen Marie of Romania [Cat. 6] during sittings for her portrait in 1936: "It is a joy to see him paint. It is pure magic; the sweetness of his hand, eye, brush is astounding. He arranges a looking glass in such a way that one can see the picture he is making and thus one remains interested all the time."⁷ He also used a handheld mirror to view the painting objectively as he was working on it.

Lady Duff Gordon [Cat. 50] also described the artistic process as magical while her sister Elinor Glyn was being painted in 1927. The portrait did not survive the Second World War owing to a direct hit on the warehouse in Cardiff where it was stored for safekeeping:

I hope you all noticed in the Daily Sketch of August 12 the photograph of the portrait of my sister, Elinor Glyn, painted by de Laszlo. It is the greatest work this genius ever accomplished, I think – and so do most people. It was painted in three hours. At 10 a.m. I went to his

studio with Elinor Glyn and there was a piece of plain millboard on the easel. When I returned at 12:30 there was the picture of her and so exactly like her it was magical. I was privileged to watch the finishing of it, for half an hour. Glorious it was – never a retouch, just straight painting and never a hesitation, and at one o'clock it was finished. I lay my homage in these few words at his feet – the great Laszlo.⁸

De László's driving ambition could affect his personality positively or, as Lucy's diaries often document, give rise to moments of volatility when work did not succeed as he felt it should. His perfectionism often drove him to put aside a picture and start again, even if in an advanced state of completion. Nor would he make changes to a finished picture at the request of a sitter. As Lucy reflected in her diary in 1909, he could not bear to carry on working on a portrait that did not meet the standard he set for himself: "His Art makes him suffer so, really much more than I realize. He said it is an awful feeling to put his name on a picture – it is the death stroke to his ideal...As long as the painting is in progress, one continues to hope."⁹



The first sketch



First brush lines of the portrait: "I believe that the frame is an integral part of the picture and must be there from the beginning."



Illustration of the sight size technique

1 Holme 1934, p. 10.

2 Rutter 1939, p. 306.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 382.

4 Holme 1934, p. 26.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

6 Philip de László, 1934 diary, 21 July entry.

7 Queen Marie of Romania, *Diaries*, vol. III / 195 (film reel 489), p. 77, National Archives of Romania, Bucharest.

8 Lady Duff Gordon, 'Dress Gladness', *The Daily Sketch*, 24 August 1927.

9 Lucy de László, 1908 diary, 12 June entry.



49
Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies

1933

Oil on canvas, 109.2 x 77.5 cm (43 x 30 ½ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *de László / 1933 29 July*

Private Collection

In 1933 Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies starred as Anne of Bohemia in Gordon Daviot's *Richard of Bordeaux*, playing opposite Sir John Gielgud as Richard II. The play opened at the New Theatre in London and was an immediate success. She had the rare ability to identify herself so closely with the part that while on stage she felt she ceased to exist. Her versatility led her to be asked to pose for *Painting a Portrait by de László* commissioned by *The Studio*. The editor Charles Holme provided the foreword and paid tribute to the sitter:

Who was there with vivaciousness and with subtlety of expression, easy to behold? We didn't mention this when we asked her, but Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies undertook the double task of posing for painter and camera at the same time. To hold an expression and pose for nine hours odd is really hard work, and is not a talent usually possessed by the average sitter.¹

The volume provides an important record of de László's artistic method and is discussed more fully in the introduction to this section. The artist's wife Lucy observed the marathon of creativity between de László, Alfred Lys Baldry [Cat. 17] and the actress at his studio at 3 Fitzjohn's Avenue and recorded it in her diary:

Philip is frightfully brain & physically tired. On the 27th / 28th Mr Holme was in the Studio to take photos of P painting Miss Ffrangcon-Davies for a volume he will bring out on how Laszlo paints portraits. Broiling days – exciting atmosphere. I was present when they began & P. was strung up, strong & confident for the ordeal. The mg. & one whole day was devoted to this work. About 150 photos were taken. Miss F. Davies was splendid in her lovely dress from Richard of Bordeaux – The posing was agonizing for her. I massaged the back of her neck in a pause – P. was so active that Mr Holme had to wait for the moment when to snap the action of his putting the paint on canvas. The portrait is full of life & expression – Lady Forbes came both days & Mr Baldry came for one night to be present also in the studio. He will supply the literary part of the volume.²

In 1934 de László painted Gwen again in her costume for the title role in Daviot's *Queen of Scots*, which he gave to her as a gift. He also painted a smaller portrait of her in the same costume which, like the present portrait, he kept in his studio until his death.

Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies was born in London on 25 January 1891, the daughter of David Ffrangcon-Davies, a well known baritone of the day, and his wife Annie Francis Rayner. As a teenager she

went backstage to see Ellen Terry, for whom she recited the potion speech from *Romeo and Juliet*. Terry gave her the encouragement she needed and she made her debut in a walk-on part in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1911. Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies became a well-known classical stage actress over some eighty years. Her long association with the heroines of William Shakespeare began with Cordelia in *King Lear* (1924) and later included Cleopatra, Portia, Titania, Ophelia, Regan, Beatrice, Queen Katharine, Lady Macbeth and Juliet to John Gielgud's *Romeo* in 1924, her most famous role. Abroad, her greatest achievement was to promote South African theatre in a difficult political climate. She did this with her South African-born friend Marda Vanne between 1943 and 1946.

She last appeared on stage in Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* in 1970, but continued to act on television and in radio, recording her last television appearance at the age of 100. Living in a small village near Halstead, Essex, in a 17th-century cottage virtually untouched by 20th-century technology, she greatly enjoyed gardening. She was created Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1991. Dame Gwen died on 27 January 1992, just after her one hundred-and-first birthday.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death

Exhibited:

- Royal West of England Academy, Bristol, *88th Annual Exhibition*, November 1933–February 1934, no. 117
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- Holme 1934, pp. 7–42
- Rutter 1939, p. 384
- de Laszlo & Wentworth-Stanley 2004, pp. 25, 193, ill. p. 192
- Hart-Davis & Corbeau-Parsons 2010, p. 248–249
- BADA 2019, p. 15, ill.
- Hungarian National Gallery 2019, p. 35, ill.

¹ Holme 1934, p. 8.

² Lucy de László, 1933 diary, 30 July entry. Lady Forbes posed for de László's War Picture, which depicted the suffering of women in conflict. It was a personal project rather than a commission and was never completed. There are some seventy preparatory drawings and oil studies recorded.

50

Lady Duff Gordon, née Lucy Christiana Sutherland

1913

Oil on board, 40.6 x 33 cm (15 ¾ x 12 ⅝ in.)

Inscribed lower left: *P.A de László / 1913 London*

Private Collection

This oil study is typical of those painted by de László to illustrate the planned composition for his sitter, in this case the British couturier Lady Duff Gordon. These studies were the second part of his artistic process, preceded by drawings made on the sitter's first visit to the studio. They were painted quickly and freely and enabled the artist to judge the effect of the colour scheme for the finished portrait. He used them as a record of his intention before painting directly onto the blank canvas in its frame set on his easel next to the subject.

Lady Duff Gordon was not pleased with this study as de László failed to include her two Pekingese dogs.¹ The artist offered to change the composition but the sitter refused and the present study remained in his studio until his death. Unidentified in the Studio Inventory, a photographic proof sent by the artist for the sitter's approval survives in the Duff Gordon family archive confirming the attribution.

Lucy, Lady Duff Gordon (1863–1935), was a leading couturier during the early 20th century and founder of the fashion house *Maison Lucile*. Her sister, the novelist Elinor Glyn (1864–1943), was painted twice by de László and was an important ambassador for the label. She contributed to the early success of the business by wearing only her sister's creations. Branches of *Lucile* were opened in London, New York, Paris and Chicago, making it the first couture house to become a global fashion brand.

De László often involved himself with the selection of the dresses his sitters wore [Cat. 9] and had a close relationship with Lady Duff Gordon despite their not coming to an understanding regarding her own portrait. A letter sent by the artist to Lady Plunket recommends her: "She certainly is the most intelligent dressmaker I have ever met and she is full of resources and good taste. I had to arrange about a costume for another sitter and while there, I saw a dress which is most fascinating. I would be so glad if you would go and see it as most probably you would like to be painted in it."²

When commissioned to paint The Hon. Marguerite Joicey in 1917 he accompanied her to *Lucile* to advise on the fabric and design of the dress made specifically for the portrait.³ Arranging her sittings with the artist, the American Mrs Frederick Lorenz Pratt asked: "Will you and Lady Duff-Gordon decide please...I shall not interfere – I am going to leave all to you."⁴

Lady Duff Gordon wrote about their working relationship in an article for the *Daily Sketch*: "He has asked me, to please him, to design dresses for evening wear long and trailing and draped, and I have done so, and I call them the Laszlo dresses. People who have seen them adore them, and so do I, but you others who jazz and Charleston I expect will have the idea of covering up your legs so that they show only now and then as the drapery moves."⁵

The sitter and her second husband Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon (1862–1931) were on board RMS *Titanic* when she sank on 15 April 1912. They escaped together in lifeboat No. 1 and were forced to defend themselves against accusations of bribing the crew to let them board. The British Board of Trade inquiry into the disaster exonerated them of any wrong-doing.

After the First World War Lady Duff Gordon sold her couture houses to an American manufacturer and abandoned her commercial rights to the name 'Lucile'. In 1922 she left the company entirely and retired from the world of fashion. Her autobiography *Discretions and Indiscretions* was published in 1932.

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
Stephen de Laszlo, his second son;
Sold at Christie's, London, 13 June 1997;
Sold at Christie's, London, 14 October 2004;
The Canon Gallery;
Private Collection;
Sold Bonhams Knightsbridge, 20 March 2018

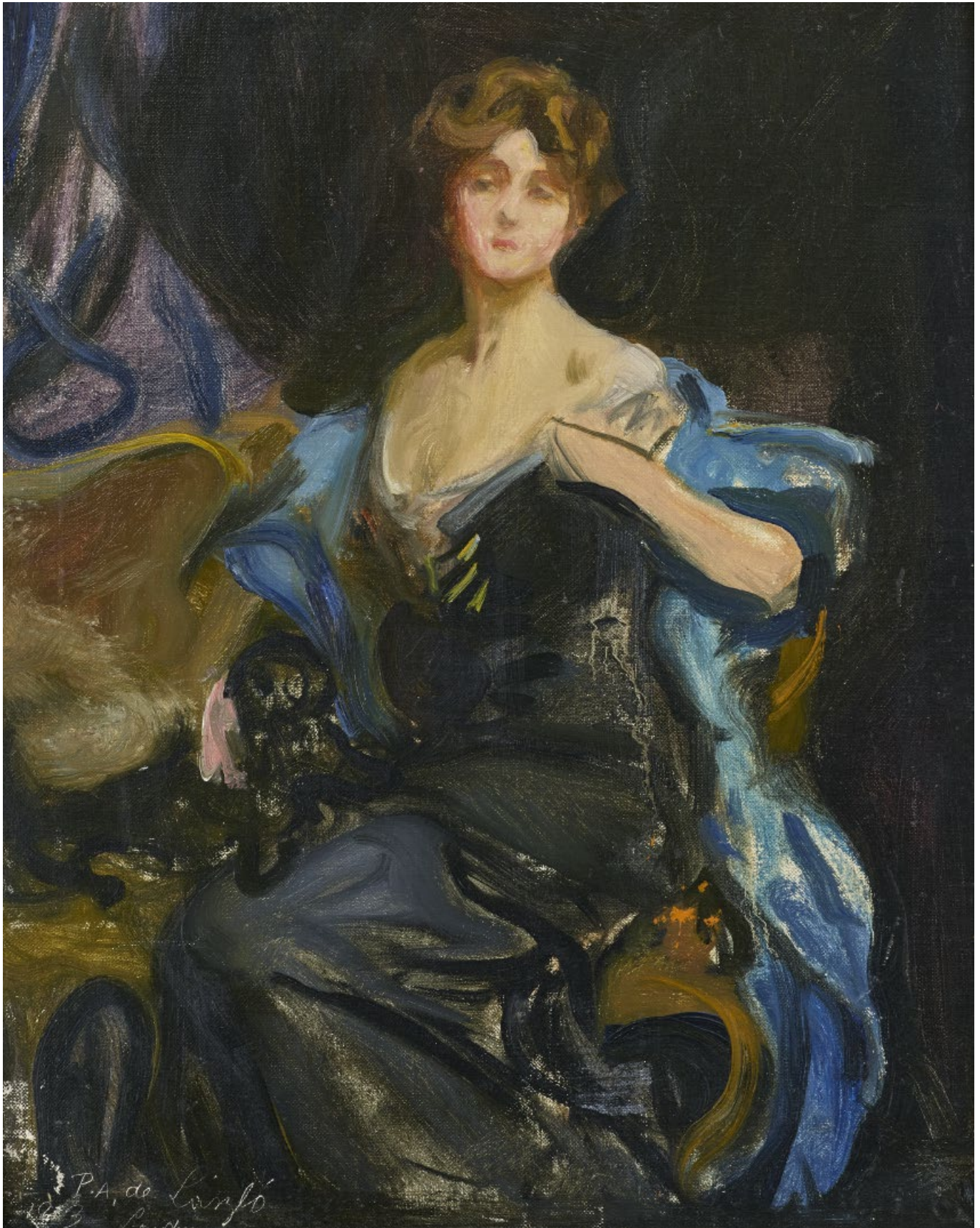
¹ As told to Randy Bryan Bigham by the sitter's grandson in 1998, during research for *Lucile, Her Life By Design: Sex, Style and the Fusion of Theatre and Couture*, San Francisco, 2012.

² DLA[unindexed], letter from de László to Lady Plunket, 26 November 1928.

³ DLA046-0004, letter from The Hon. Marguerite Joicey to de László, 17 May 1916; DLA046-0003, letter from The Hon. Marguerite Joicey to de László, 4 July 1916.

⁴ DLA081-0148, letter from Mrs Frederick Lorenz Pratt to de László, undated [1929].

⁵ Lady Duff Gordon, 'Dress Gladness', *Daily Sketch*, 24 August 1927.



51

A Mannequin from 'Lucile', Lady Duff Gordon's Fashion House

1927

Oil on canvas, 83.9 x 60.4 cm (33 x 23 ¾ in.)

Inscribed lower right: *de László / 1927.*

Private Collection

In 1927 the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation filmed de László painting this portrait for its weekly newsreel. He selected as his model a mannequin from the fashion house *Maison Lucile*, founded by his friend and collaborator Lady Duff Gordon [Cat. 50]. Gaumont newsreels were shown as part of larger cinema programmes from 1910 to 1932. Edited by Louis Behr after 1915, they typically had seven national and international stories for each edition.

The film is about seven minutes long and shows the artist outside his studio at 3 Fitzjohn's Avenue holding his palette before moving inside to demonstrate his process: from drawing the composition in a sketchbook while standing in front of the model to the placement of the framed canvas and easel next to her and then starting to paint. It is an extraordinary insight and, with the volume *Painting a Portrait by de László* [see Cat. 49], provides an in-depth understanding of his artistic method. Additional footage of the artist painting the Bronze Horses of St Mark's in Venice, a young boy in Bolzano, Italy, and Lord Louis Mountbatten survives in his personal film archive.¹

Lady Duff Gordon was an early proponent of the mannequin parade, the precursor to today's runway shows which became fundamental to a fashion label's success. The young women working as mannequins were not yet destined for international stardom as many are today and this sitter remains unidentified.



Philip painting the Lucile model 1927

Provenance:

In the possession of the artist on his death;
Patrick de Laszlo, his fourth son

¹ Available to view in the artist's film archive via the website of the de Laszlo Archive Trust: <https://www.delaszlocatalogueraisonnee.com/archive/film-archive>.





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A NOTE ON SOURCES

De László was conscious of his reputation both in the present and for posterity and his extensive archive is a unique source of important material for those with an interest in the history of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The de Laszlo Archive Trust has donated more than 15,000 items of correspondence and press cuttings to the Heinz Archive and Library at the National Portrait Gallery in London. A significant amount of material remains in the de László Catalogue Raisonné office, London, and continues to be indexed and added to the archive's database.

References from manuscripts in the archive that have been indexed are identified in the essays and catalogue entries by the initials 'DLA' followed by the file and item numbers. Philip and Lucy de László's diaries and appointment books are held in the de László Catalogue Raisonné office, London; these have yet to be indexed. Lucy's diaries are in the process of being published [see Field 2019 in Selected Bibliography]. The artist bequeathed his Sitters' Books, in two volumes, to the British Library at the time of his death.

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Philip de László filming the Crawley and Horsham Point to Point, 1934
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Philip de László riding a mule, Aswan, Egypt, 1929
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Philip de László, Charpentier Gallery, Paris, 1931
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Front cover of *Painting a Portrait by de László*, 1934
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Interior of *Exhibition at Widenstein & Co. London*, 1937
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PHILIP DE LÁSZLÓ IN ENGLAND: TRIUMPH, TRIBULATION AND RESTORATION

1909 *Philip de László wearing his MVO decoration, Palace Gate, London*
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Field Marshal Sir George Stuart White, 1900 [7724]
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Alfred East, 1907 [3385]
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Lady Wantage, née Harriet Loyd, [4473]
Nick Pollard © de Laszlo Foundation

Lady George Wellesley, née Louise Nesta Pamela FitzGerald; other married name Lady Richard Wellesley, 1913 [4142]
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Sir Samuel Luke Fildes, RA, 1914 [5069]
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Lucy de László and Luke Fildes, Bad Kissengen, 1909
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Sir Arthur Stockdale Cope, 1935 [111909]
Matthew Hollow © de Laszlo Foundation

Comparative slide, An equestrian fragment from Epidaurus; image right Modernist sculpture of a human figure by an unknown artist
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W.C.H. King (1884–1973), 1917 [13550]
Bust of Philip de László
Ellen McDermott © de Laszlo Foundation

DAZZLING BEAUTIES –PHILIP DE LÁSZLÓ'S SITTERS AND THEIR JEWELLERY

Irene Mountbatten, Marchioness of Carisbrooke, née Lady Irene Frances Adza Denison, 1934 [3183]
Joaquín Cortés © de Laszlo Foundation

Study for the Tiara and Necklace worn by Elisabeth, Queen of Hungary and Empress of Austria, 1901 [112110]
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

Winifred Anna Cavendish-Bentinck, Duchess of Portland, née Winifred Dallas-Yorke, 1925 [4423]
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The Marchioness of Londonderry, née the Honourable Edith Chaplin, 1927 [6138]
Bryan Rutledge © de Laszlo Foundation

Princess Anastasia of Greece and Denmark, née May Stewart, 1922 [7809]
Collection of Middlebury College Museum of Art, Vermont. Bequest of Nancy and Edward Wynkoop

Queen Marie, the Queen Mother of Romania, née Princess Marie of Edinburgh, 1936 [2961]
Matthew Hollow © de Laszlo Foundation

Princess Henry of Battenberg, née Princess Beatrice of Great Britain, 1926 [3488]
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COTTAGES AND CASTLES – THE QUEST FOR PHILIP DE LÁSZLÓ'S PORTRAITS

Paul Ferdinand Anton Laib, 1934 [5994]
© The Courtauld Gallery, London

Negative of *Baron Iván Rubido-Zichy*, 1931
Laib © de Laszlo Foundation

Page from the artist's Sitters' Book
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Hofbräuhaus, 1892 [11699]
Tibor Mester © de Laszlo Foundation

The Minor family at Berwick Lodge, Ryde, 1898
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

Mrs Joseph Grafton Minor and her son Grafton, 1898 [6333]
© Santa Barbara Museum of Art

Dorothea Helena Carnegie, 1927 [6269]
© Antonia Reeve

Chief Medicine Eagle, 1923 [6314]
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Lady Northcliffe, née Mary Milner, 1911 [4496]
© Moore Allen & Innocent Auction House

Mrs Arthur Graham Glasgow, née Margaret Branch, 1910 [5353]
Photography by John Kelletr, Dublin Ireland © de Laszlo Foundation

Prince Michael of Romania, later His Majesty King Michael I of Romania, 1936 [4218]
Christian Poite © de Laszlo Foundation

ROYAL PATRONAGE:

King Edward VII, 1907 [7705]
© c/o de Laszlo Foundation (Norwegian Royal Collection)

Queen Victoria Eugenia of Spain, née Princess Victoria Eugénie Julia Ena of Battenberg, 1926 [11168]
Stefano Fabi © de Laszlo Foundation

De László standing next to his portrait of Princess Andrew of Greece and Denmark with his sitter and her husband seated alongside, 1907
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

De László at the Charpentier Gallery, 1931
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

Queen Marie of Romania's gold bracelet
© National Museum of Romanian History

THE GRAND MANNER:

Winifred Anna Cavendish-Bentinck, Duchess of Portland, née Winifred Dallas-Yorke, 1912 [4411]
Roy Fox Fine Art Photography © de Laszlo Foundation

The Viscountess Castlereagh, née the Honourable Edith Chaplin, 1913 [6142]
© National Trust

Frances Vane-Tempest, wife of 3rd Marquess of Londonderry and her son George Henry Robert Charles William Vane-Tempest, Viscount Seaham, 1828
By Sir Thomas Lawrence
© National Trust

Lady Buchanan-Jardine, née Jean Barbara Hamilton, 1928 [3739]
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THE CREATIVE FORCE:

Philip Alexius de László, 1931 [11339]
By Prince Paul Troubetzkoy
Peter Makrai © de Laszlo Foundation

Professor Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie, 1934 [6896]
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Helen Fraser, later Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, 1909 [110720]
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Bookplate designed by Francis Adam for Philip de László
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Keys designed by Francis Adam for Philip de László
Matthew Hollow © de Laszlo Foundation

Anny Ahlers sitting for her portrait in de László's Studio
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

Philip and Alfred Baldry at Fitzjohn's Avenue studio, London, c.1922
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

De László in conversation with the Duke of Connaught
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

THE ARTIST'S WAR:

Captain Thomas Arthur Nelson, 1916 [6433]
© Antonia Reeve

Robert Wynn-Carington, Viscount Wendover, 1911 [7718]
Roy Fox Fine Art Photography © de Laszlo Foundation

Philip Alexius de László, 1917 [8685]
Rob Cardillo © de Laszlo Foundation

Photo of Lieutenant James Robert Dundas McEwen
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

Front page of *John Bull* [DLA165-0003]
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

FAMILY LIFE

Philip de László painting Lucy de László with Yang, seated on a bench in a garden at Littleworth Corner, 1928
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Henry Guinness de Laszlo, 1910 [8237]
© de Laszlo Foundation

John Adolphus de Laszlo, 1916 [11033]
Roy Fox Fine Art Photography © de Laszlo Foundation

PAINTING FOR PLEASURE

Still from Archive Film depicting Lucy and the artist painting the Bronze Horses of St Mark's, Venice, 1926
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

Philip de László sketching in the Roman ruins of old Carthage, 1923
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

Bronze Horses of St Mark's, Venice, 1926 [11636]
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Venetian Fête at St Mark's Basilica, Venice, 1923 [11422]
Roy Fox Fine Art Photography © de Laszlo Foundation

Study of an Egyptian Boy with Flower, 1929 [9438]
Rob Cardillo © de Laszlo Foundation

Study of the hotel coffee boy at Aswan, 1929 [11631]
Matthew Hollow © de Laszlo Foundation

THE ARTIST'S METHOD:

De László's large travel case for oil paint with paint box, brushes, palette and various tools
Matthew Hollow © de Laszlo Foundation

De László's brushes
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

Dame Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, 1933 [113579]
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

De László painting Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies
de Laszlo Archive © de Laszlo Foundation

Still from archive film showing de László painting the mannequin from Lucile
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BACK COVER

De László with palm leaves behind, date unknown
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