Going public—portraits from the Colin Holden Collection

Acknowledgements

Going public is a selection of works from the Colin Holden Collection of Australian and International prints, of which Geelong Gallery is custodian on behalf of the Colin Holden Charitable Trust. As a collector, historian, author, and curator the late Dr Colin Holden (1951–2016) shared his comprehensive knowledge of Australian and International printmaking with Geelong Gallery's audiences for over twenty years through the development of scholarly, thought-provoking exhibitions and lectures.

Colin amassed a remarkable collection of outstanding quality, and Geelong Gallery's custodianship of it further consolidates our distinctive, excellent representation of printmaking from the seventeenth century to the present day. The breadth and depth of the Colin Holden Collection adds materially and meaningfully to the range of researched, imaginative exhibitions we can curate.

I am grateful to Louise Box, Shane Carmody and Geoffrey Edwards, Trustees of the Colin Holden Charitable Trust, for their support of and valued commitment to Geelong Gallery.

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Jason Smith, Director & CEO

James McArdell
Rachel de Ruvigny, Countess of Southampton 1758

COVER
Jean-Jacques Flipart
Concours pour le prix de l'étude des têtes et de l'expression
[Competition for the prize for the study of heads and expression] 1763

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In 1689, the English diarist and collector John Evelyn wrote enthusiastically of the portrait prints he had begun collecting in earnest, excitedly describing them as 'effigies of those who have made … a noise and bustle in the world, either by their madnesse [*sic*] and folly, or a more conspicuous figure by their wit and learning'.[1] As a newly minted connoisseur of printed images, Evelyn's statement reflects a particular focus of the European printing boom of the 17th and 18th centuries. This period fostered a revived interest in portraiture, and printmaking was used to reproduce existing painted portraits to illustrate books and pamphlets, or to be sold as relatively affordable artworks in their own right. Thus, printmaking provided new and expanded opportunities for the images of individuals who shaped the era's political, societal and cultural milieus—or in Evelyn's words, those who made a 'noise and bustle in the world'— to be disseminated and recognised.

Going public—portraits from the Colin Holden Collection assembles works from this pivotal era that illustrate how visual information about significant individuals was brought into the printed medium. Drawn from the collection of the late Colin Holden, who, like John Evelyn three centuries before him, was a passionate collector and connoisseur of prints, the exhibition features works by a number of the period's master printmakers.

These virtuosic engravers and etchers developed new ways of closely imitating the texture, tone and spirit of existing painted portraits, elevating printmaking to an art form that captured the status, occupation, achievements and character of their subjects.

These centuries saw portraiture extend beyond the realm of the wealthy elite, who could afford to commission and display painted portraits in non-public settings, as previously singular and privately owned images were made available through democratic channels. There are clear parallels between printmaking and the contemporary phenomena of mass media, the medium's reproductive nature a fitting vehicle for the propagation of celebrity. The exhibition's title alludes to this increase in image trading, and subsequently, the mercantile implications of 'going public': the likenesses of influential personages could now be bought and sold with relative freedom. So, as highly circulated visual representations of their sitters, portrait prints were charged with the task of communicating a carefully crafted set of cues to a much wider audience than ever before.

Going public—portraits from the Colin Holden Collection installation view, Geelong Gallery, 2020

After settling in Paris in the late 1640s, Robert Nanteuil quickly earned a reputation as a skilled portraitist and was appointed as Designer and Engraver to the King in the court of Louis XIV. Throughout his career he engraved the likenesses of over two hundred court members and the Parisian elite, his refined and physiognomically accurate impressions of sitters dominating engraving styles into the 18th century. This approach befitted royal patronage at a time when portraiture served a central role in asserting the power and influence of the upper classes to their peers and subjects alike. As print scholar William Ivins has observed, Nanteuil's works constitute a 'deliberately contrived net of rationality, which was invented for the purpose of portraying the masks that did duty for the faces of the men in high places under the king'.[2] To achieve this, Nanteuil masterfully exploited the innate formality of engraving to produce portraits that uniformly convey his subjects as dignified and self-assured: two qualities notable in his 1649 portrait of François de Vendôme, Duc de Beaufort [Cat. no. 12], based on the painting by Jean Nocret.

François de Vendôme was a charismatic and vocal member of the French court during the 1630s, emerging as a natural favourite of the masses who bestowed upon him the title of 'king of the markets'.

Although accounts from the period describe him as a man of mediocre intelligence and unscrupulous character, public subscriptions were nonetheless instituted to pay his mounting debts— the writer François de La Rochefoucauld remarking in 1672 that 'no man with so few amiable qualities was so generally loved.'[3]

Nanteuil's talent for masking flawed characters with a quiet dignity can be discerned in the rendering of the Duke's armour, of which no detail has been spared: each and every scallop, embossed ornament and fixing is precisely articulated, effectively encasing the Duke in an exoskeleton of valour. Nanteuil's deft maneuvering of the burin is evident in the varying angles and applications of pressure he used to cut into the printing plate, a technique that has produced fluid lines that taper and swell throughout the composition. The effect of this is clearly visible in the sheen on the Duke's left arm, created by areas of cross hatching and closely laid curved lines that gradually diminish to a moment of negative space. Similarly, narrow interstitial lines and bold, deep incisions on the breast plate are skillfully alternated to describe the lustre of highly polished metal.

Robert Nanteuil
François de Vendôme, Duc de Beaufort 1649
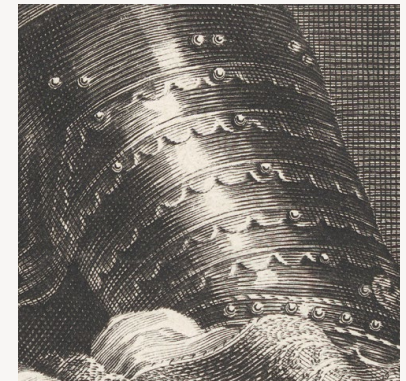
Jean Morin
Henri II de Lorraine, Duc de Guise c. 1630

As a counterpoint to the highly systematised clarity brought forth by Nanteuil's style of engraving, Jean Morin's portrait of Henri II de Lorraine, Duc de Guise [Cat. no. 11] after Justus Sustermans provides an example of how etching, a neighboring form of intaglio printing, can bring different dimensions of a sitter's character to light. Morin was the preferred engraver of prominent academy painter Philippe de Champaigne, and is best known for his unique approach to the modelling of faces and heads.

Identified by freely executed lines that retain a sense of having been placed by impulse rather than design, etchings often seem to stand in opposition to the formality typical of French print portraiture from the era. Where engravers use a v-shaped burin to extract metal from the printing plate, etchers employ a needle that creates fine lines that lack the swelling quality of engraving, but produces a more idiosyncratic effect akin to drawing. So, in place of a terrain of tapering parallel lines, Morin assembled the features and textures of his sitter's faces using a seemingly improvised series of tiny dots, ticks and flicks. The tonality achieved with this manual technique resembles the stippling used to create a mezzotint, an example of which can be seen in James McArdell's portrait of Rachel de Ruvigny, Countess of Southampton [Cat. no. 10].[4]

This tonality allowed Morin to accentuate the personality and humanity of his sitters, a quality that in the eyes of historian Louis R Metcalfe translates to a 'peculiar sensation of familiarity with the human being represented' in Morin's etchings.[5] In Morin's portrait, familiarity is in part incited by the vulnerable expression captured on Henri's face, his apprehensive and wary gaze seemingly at odds with his military regalia. A sense of curiosity about Henri's personal life is also prompted by his tousled lovelock—the section of hair worn over his left shoulder as a sign of devotion to a loved one—inviting speculation as to who the object of this public declaration of romantic attachment may be. Compared with the steely tenacity that emanates from Nanteuil's portrait of François de Vendôme, Morin's humanistic regard of his subject yields an unexpectedly intimate encounter with a nobleman of similarly high rank.

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In the language of 17th and 18th century portraiture, clothing and accessories are integral details that convey important information about a sitter's social status. These elements were carefully chosen by sitters and artists for the symbolic meaning they infer, as Pieter Stevens van Gunst's portrait of Henrietta Maria, Queen of Great Britain [Cat. no. 14] after Anthony Van Dyck demonstrates.

Henrietta Maria arrived in England from her native France as a fifteen year old to take her position as Queen consort of King Charles I, accompanied by a vast trousseau of finery. Importantly, as a devout Catholic marrying into the royal family of a resolutely Protestant country, she was an easy target for public hatred and suspicion. Portraits of Henrietta Maria thus aimed to suppress visual allusions to her nationality and religious beliefs, instead privileging symbols suggestive of traditional female virtues.

Her love of jewellery—especially pearls—is well documented, and as van Gunst's work shows us, she was often pictured wearing them in a variety of presentations. Given their associations with wealth and prestige, the sheer volume of pearls in this portrait clearly asserts Henrietta Maria as a woman of significant means and rank. In addition to her crown, earrings and necklace, pearls adorn her fashionably ringleted hair and embellish the bodice and sleeves of her gown. Pearls also harbour allusions to purity and fertility—two qualities that any queen was expected to possess in order to secure the advancement of her royal family. At the time Van Dyck completed the original painted portrait in c. 1638, Henrietta had borne four out of the six children that would survive infancy. So, an interpretation of the pearl that reflects her maternal role is an entirely valid one.

HENRIETTA MARIA,
Queen of Great Britain.

Pieter Stevens van Gunst
Henrietta Maria, Queen of Great Britain c. 1713–15
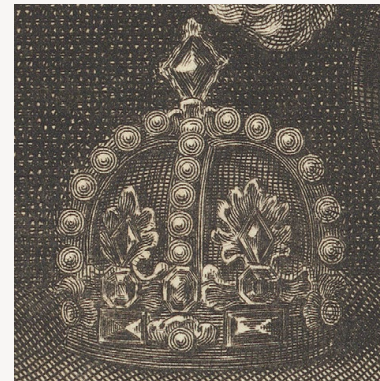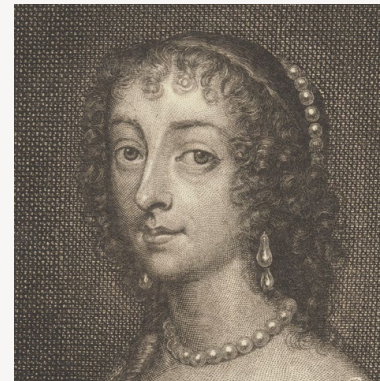
Conversely, depictions of pearls would have had a particular religious resonance with Henrietta Maria, having appeared in Catholic iconography since the Middle Ages as a symbol associated with the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary. There are also accounts of a pearl cross that Henrietta Maria brought with her to England which she regularly wore in private settings, however, this piece of pious jewellery has been omitted from any visual representation. As much as the symbolic presence of pearls might appear to delineate a dutiful wife in service of the English empire, then, they can nonetheless be understood as subtle evocations of Henrietta Maria's own religious beliefs, and could potentially have been worn in a deliberate act to assert her own identity as distinct from that of her English husband[6]—a gesture amplified as images of her were circulated far and wide in print.

In Pierre Drevet's engraving of Marie d'Orléans, Demoiselle de Longueville [Cat. no. 3] after the painting by Hyacinthe Rigaud, the use of costume and symbolic items tells an altogether different story. Marie, having eschewed a number of early proposals, eventually married Henri II de Savoie, Duc de Nemours in 1657 in her early thirties, though he was to die only two years later.

Then, after the death of her brother in 1694, she embarked on a legal battle to oppose the exclusion of women from her familial line of succession. Eventually she won, retaining the title of sovereign princess of Neuchâtel until her death in 1707.

Although her achievement of over-turning patriarchal power structures is objectively the most impressive aspect of her life, it is Marie's classification as a wealthy 18th century widow that takes precedence in this portrait—a position evoked by her funereal black dress (that was often worn for the remainder of a widow's life after the death of their husband) and the dark mantelet that covers her lace cap. As is customary with mourning attire from the era, she wears no jewellery, however, illuminated at the rear left of the image, her hand hovers possessively over a crown decorated with *fleur de lys*—the definitive symbol of French royalty.

Though her status as an aging widow foregrounds this work, Marie still clearly displays herself as a woman of royal heritage—even holding the ends of somber mourning garb with aplomb. Overall, this work's symbolic overtones reinforce female gender norms whilst providing evidence of their transgression: a duality representative of Marie's lasting legacy.

Pierre Drevet
Marie d'Orléans, Demoiselle de Longueville 1707

As the discussion of works thus far reveals, printed portraits remain inextricably linked to their original painted versions long after they are released from the printer's press. In *Going public*, one work in particular that prompts a closer examination of this relationship is the portrait of Émilie du Châtelet by Rémi Delvaux [Cat. no. 2]. To today's audiences, this three-quarter length image of a well-dressed woman does not reveal much about its sitter, so for more visual information we must refer to the original portrait painted by Marianne Loir in c. 1745.[7]

Loir's portrait shows Émilie in a study, holding a mathematical compass in her right hand and a floral specimen in the left, with an astronomical model and papers on the desk behind her. Throughout this period, sitters routinely posed with the tools of their profession as a way of communicating excellence and achievements made in their field. Therefore, the array of scientific implements and manuscripts placed in her midst would have clearly signalled to an 18th century audience Émilie's status as a leading scientist and philosopher. Indeed, Émilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, marquise du Châtelet (her full title) was one of the few publically recognised female intellectuals of the era. She authored the first French translation of Isaac Newton's *Principia*, which detailed the basic laws of physics, amongst a host of other publications whose propositions continue to govern scientific thought.

Why then, have these critical elements of her character biography been omitted from her printed portrait? The answer lies in the specific context for which this work was created. As a skilled draftsman and vignettist, Delvaux was a favourite artist of Parisian editor Hubert Cazin, who commissioned him to produce illustrations for a variety of publications by philosophers, playwrights and poets. The format of this work is consistent with that used for 18th century book illustrations, and a survey of Delvaux's prints reveal that the majority follow a similarly abbreviated convention. A dealer's inscription in the margin of Émilie's portrait which states that it is from 'a large paper edition of 'Voltaire'', likely referring to its inclusion in a compendium of Voltaire's writings, also supports an understanding of this print as an illustration designed to provide concise accompaniment to a written work.

So, although there is a clear rationale for this work's lack of detail, the decision to remove these visual signifiers has clear consequences. Because Émilie's genius was recognised during her lifetime, a select community would have understood the shorthand of the printed portrait at the time of its publication. Over the past two hundred years, however, Émilie's achievements have largely been overlooked or downplayed in historical discourse. Therefore, this print currently denies its audiences a visual connection to her role in scientific history.

Rémi Delvaux
Émilie du Châtelet c. late 1700s

Without referring back to the original painted portrait, the accomplishments of this exceptional woman are somewhat eroded in Delvaux's print. What this shows us, then, is that the artistic and editorial license deployed in the creation of printed portraits remains relevant, and the context governing their creation must be factored into their interpretation.

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Through their integration of new artistic modes of expression, application of symbolism and dissemination through non fine-art channels, reproductive portrait prints promoted knowledge and appreciation of their sitters far beyond the specific social, geographical and temporal contexts that generated their original painted manifestations. Considering that Geelong Gallery is fortunate enough to exhibit a selection of these centuries-old European works, which made their way into the hands of an Australian collector in the last forty years, the expanded network of image exchange brought forth by the printed medium is evidently still as active now as it was in the 17th and 18th centuries. More than mere facsimiles of existing imagery, these prints are vital records that illustrate how printmakers took to the task of translating paintings into new linear formations, and demonstrate the rejuvenation of printmaking and portraiture alike.

Deirdre Cannon, Curatorial Assistant

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installation view, Geelong Gallery, 2020

Endnotes

1. Eric Chamberlain, *Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge: Prints and Drawings—Portraits*, Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1994, p. xi.

2. William Ivins, 'The tyranny of the rule', *Prints and Visual Communication*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953, p. 82.

3. Indianapolis Museum of Art, 'François de Vendôme, Duc de Beaufort', viewed 28 January 2020, <http://collection.imamuseum.org/artwork/28514/>

4. Stippling refers to the process of covering the printing matrix with thousands of little dots with a rocker—a cylindrical metal tool covered with small teeth used to 'roughen' the plate, creating subtle gradations of tone.

5. Louis R Metcalfe, 'Jean Morin', in Fitz Roy Carrington (ed.), *Prints and Their Makers; Essays on Engravers and Etchers Old and Modern*, New York: The Century Co., 1912, p. 60.

6. Karen Ruth Britland, *Neoplatonic Identities: Literary Representation and the Politics of Queen Henrietta Maria's Court Circle*, PhD thesis, School of English, The University of Leeds, 2000, p. 80.

7. Musée des Beaux Arts de Bordeaux, 'Portrait de Gabrielle Emilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, marquise du Châtelet', viewed 31 January 2020, <http://musba-bordeaux.opacweb.fr/fr/search-notice/detail/41mrtbeu edpwvdezrbu4ns9c0w5oijnk49wekaer787wb1h3xq>

Illustrated catalogue checklist

Cat. no. 1

Jean DAULLÉ
French 1703–1763

Hyacinthe RIGAUD (after)
French 1659–1743

Hyacinthe Rigaud painting a portrait of his wife 1742
engraving; state iv/iv
56.1 x 43.0 cm (sheet)
47.1 x 34.5 cm (plate)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 2

Rémi DELVAUX
French 1748–1823

Marianne LOIR (after)
French c. 1715–1769

Émilie du Châtelet c. late 1700s
etching and engraving
19.6 x 13.5 cm (sheet)
13.0 x 8.4 cm (image)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 3

Pierre DREVET
French 1663–1738

Hyacinthe RIGAUD (after)
French 1659–1743

Marie d'Orléans, Demoiselle de Longueville 1707
engraving
56.4 x 40.8 cm (sheet)
47.4 x 34.1 cm (plate)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 4

Jean-Pierre-Julien DUPIN
French mid-to-late-18th century

Claude-Louis DESRAIS (after)
French 1746–1816

Mademoiselle Contat, de la Comédie Française jouant le rôle de Suzanne dans Le Mariage de Figaro [Mademoiselle Contat of the Comédie Française playing the role of Suzanne in *The Marriage of Figaro*] c. 1750
engraving
26.6 x 19.8 cm (sheet)
19.8 x 11.5 cm (plate)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cher Mouton à te voir si bien representé.   Je suis de ton portrait doublement enchanté.
Par des Charmes secrets je me laisse surprendre.   Je te vois et je crois t'entendre.

Cat. no. 5

Gérard EDELINCK
Flemish, French 1640–1707

François DE TROY (after)
French 1645–1730

Charles Mouton c. 1692
engraving
45.5 x 34.9 cm (sheet)
42.8 x 34.9 cm (image)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 6

Jean-Jacques FLIPART
French 1719–1782

Charles-Nicolas COCHIN LE JEUNE (after)
French 1715–1790

Concours pour le prix de l'étude des têtes et de l'expression [Competition for the prize for the study of heads and expression] 1763
etching and engraving
29.9 x 35.1 cm (sheet)
23.5 x 28.4 cm (plate)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 7

Nicolaes LAUWERS
Flemish 1600–1652

Anthony VAN DYCK (after)
Flemish, British 1599–1641

Lelio Brancacci c. 1630–40
engraving; state iii/iv
36.2 x 23.9 cm (sheet)
22.1 x 16.8 cm (plate)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 8

Pierre LOMBART
French 1613–1682

Anthony VAN DYCK (after)
Flemish, British 1599–1641

Lucia Countess of Carlisle c. 1660–63
engraving; from the 'Countesses' series
34.5 x 25.8 cm (sheet)
31.9 x 25.8 cm (image)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 9

C MATHEY
French c. 1730–1765

Jean-Baptiste SANTERRE (after)
French 1651–1717

Michel Richard de Lalande c. 1750
engraving
14.8 x 10.0 cm (sheet)
13.5 x 9.5 cm (image)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 10

James McARDELL
Irish 1728–1765

Anthony VAN DYCK (after)
Flemish, British 1599–1641

Rachel de Ruvigny, Countess of Southampton 1758
mezzotint; state ii/iv
53.2 x 38.5 cm (sheet)
50.1 x 35.3 cm (image)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 11

Jean MORIN
French c. 1595–1650

Justus SUSTERMANS (after)
Flemish 1597–1681

Henri II de Lorraine, Duc de Guise c. 1630
etching and engraving; state i/iii
30.4 x 24.0 cm (sheet)
29.3 x 23.5 cm (image)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 12

Robert NANTEUIL
French c. 1623–1678

Jean NOCRET (after)
French c. 1615–1672

François de Vendôme, Duc de Beaufort 1649
engraving
44.3 x 35.3 cm (sheet)
43.0 x 34.2 cm (plate)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

GABRIEL VINCENT THEVENARD
Pension.r du Roi pour la Musique
Né à Paris, le 10. Août 1669.

Cat. no. 13

George Friedrich SCHMIDT
German 1712–1775

Charles Etienne GUESLAIN (after)
French 1685–1765

Gabriel Vincent Thevenard c. 1750
engraving
24.0 x 15.0 cm (sheet)
14.0 x 10.2 cm (plate)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 14

Pieter Stevens VAN GUNST
Netherlands 1659–1724

Anthony VAN DYCK (after)
Flemish, British 1599–1641

Henrietta Maria, Queen of Great Britain c. 1713–15
engraving
55.0 x 36.8 cm (sheet)
51.4 x 32.1 cm (plate)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

Cat. no. 15

Johann Jakob THOURNEYSER
Swiss 1636–1711

H DESCHAU (after)
c. 1600s

*Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, Duchesse de Montpensier
('Mademoiselle')* 1671
engraving
39.2 x 32.2 cm (sheet)
38.8 x 31.6 cm (plate)
Colin Holden Charitable Trust

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