



41 **Andy Warhol**

1928 – 1987 American

Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom, from Reigning Queens, Royal Edition (F.S.II.337A)

screenprint on Lenox Museum Board with diamond dust, signed in graphite, editioned R 8/30 and stamped with the Rupert Jasen Smith, New York blindstamp and on verso stamped with the artist's copyright stamp, 1985
39 3/8 x 31 1/2 in, 100 x 80 cm

PROVENANCE

Martin Lawrence Galleries, New Jersey
Acquired from the above by the present Private Collection, Toronto, 1989

LITERATURE

Frayda Feldman and Jörg Schellman, *Andy Warhol Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné 1962–1987*, fourth edition, 2003, catalogue #11.337A, listed and reproduced page 143, listed page 219

Tony Shafrazi, editor, *Andy Warhol Portraits*, 2007, page 17

IN 1982, ANDY WARHOL'S European dealer and publisher George Mulder wrote to Queen Elizabeth's private secretary, Sir William Heseltine, to state Warhol's wish to produce a set of screenprint portraits of the monarch. While the Palace accorded the request, Heseltine's response was muted: "While the Queen would certainly not wish to put any obstacles in Mr. Warhol's way, she would not dream of offering any comment on this idea" (see figure 1). In 1985, this first reserved response changed to a more positive tone when the Queen saw photographs of Warhol's screenprints. In another letter, Heseltine thanked Mulder and commented that "Her Majesty was most pleased and interested to see" these images (figure 2).



Andy Warhol holding a screenprint of *Queen Elizabeth II* in his studio at the Factory, New York, 1985
Photo: Derek Hudson
Courtesy of Getty Images

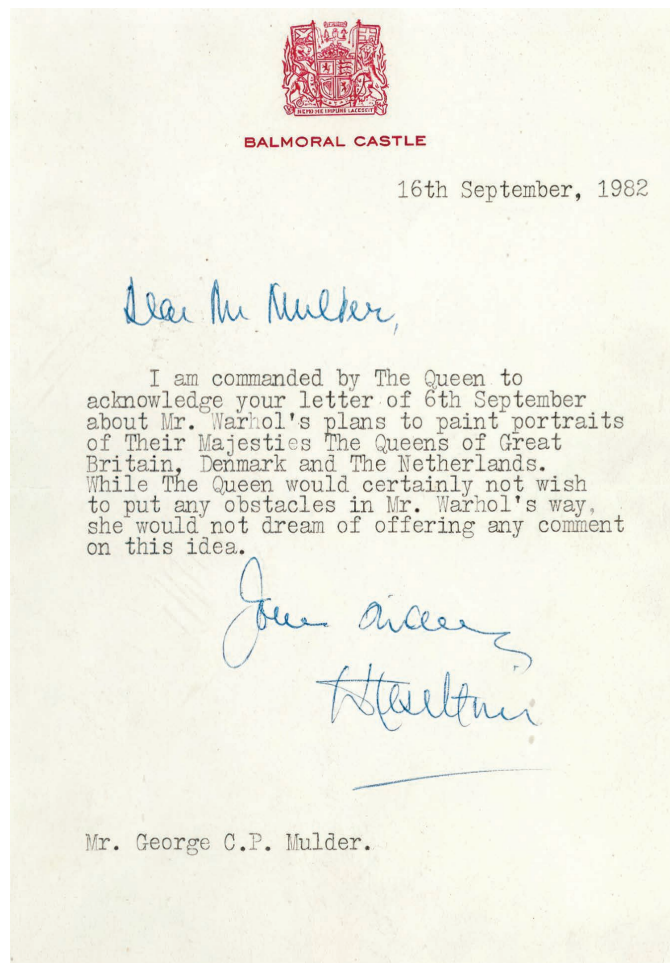


FIGURE 1: Letter from Sir William Heseltine to publisher George C.P. Mulder, September 16, 1982

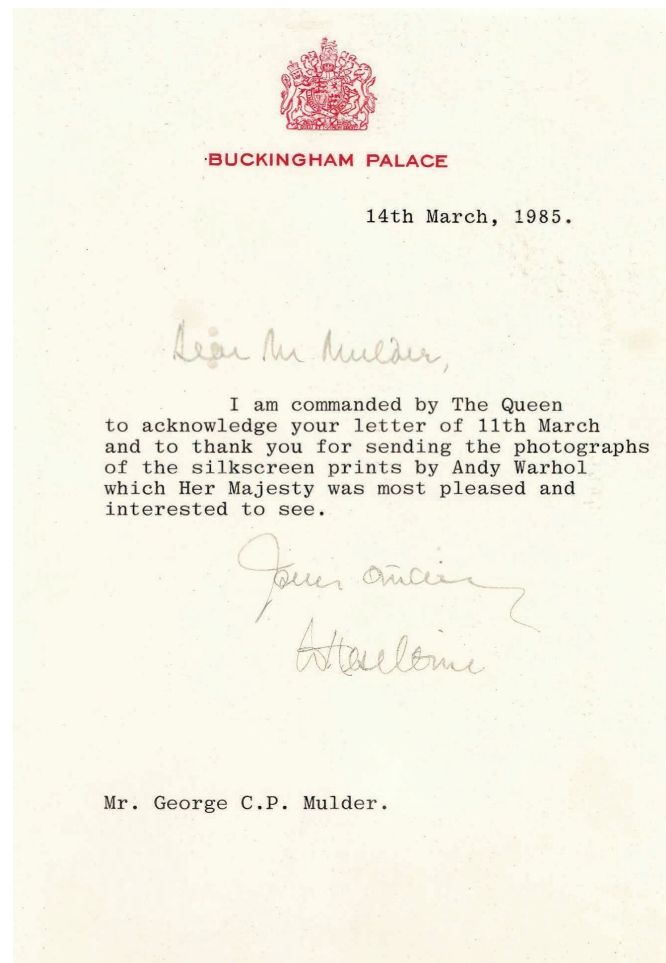


FIGURE 2: Letter from Sir William Heseltine to publisher George C.P. Mulder, March 14, 1985

As the longest-reigning monarch of the British crown, Elizabeth II was the subject of many portraits—official and otherwise—produced by some of the world’s most illustrious painters and photographers. Heseltine’s guarded response showed the care with which Elizabeth II’s image was treated. Warhol, as the avant-garde prince of Pop Art, was perhaps regarded with caution. He was well-known for his portraits of public figures: film stars such as Liz Taylor and Marilyn Monroe, political figures such as John F. Kennedy and Mao Zedong, music stars such as Elvis. Warhol was fascinated with celebrities, and the Queen was renowned around the world.

Warhol proceeded to produce his *Reigning Queens* series, a set of large portraits published in 1985, based on official or media photographs of the only four reigning queens in the world at the time: Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, and Queen Ntfombi Tfwala of Swaziland (now Eswatini). This iconic image of Queen Elizabeth II is based on a photograph taken by Peter Grurgeon at Windsor Castle in 1975, which was released in 1977

on the occasion of her Silver Jubilee. She is beautiful, resplendent in her regalia of the diamond and pearl Grand Duchess Vladimir Tiara and a diamond and pearl necklace, wearing a blue sash pinned with a medallion with a miniature portrait of her father, George VI. Her expression is somewhat Mona Lisa-like—she has an enigmatic smile and appears to look beyond the photographer. She is warm but dignified, conscious of the fact that she is sitting for a formal photograph. Tony Shafrazi noted: “The image [of Queen Elizabeth] was interesting and had that iconic look about it in and of itself. No matter who the individual was, the colour, the graphic impact, and the pose of the subject were the most important factors in any given portrait.”

With his unerring eye for a great image that truly represented the sitter, Warhol understood that the Grurgeon photograph caught the Queen in a classic pose: regal, confident, and radiating warmth and charisma. Warhol was keenly aware of how celebrities were mythologized and consumed by the public. In a sea of images of the Queen, this one truly stands out. Although the Queen was renowned for her discretion and dignity, rarely



FIGURE 3: *The Queen: Portraits of a Monarch*, an exhibition at Windsor Castle that included the suite of four screenprints of Elizabeth II, Royal Edition, by Andy Warhol, 2012
Photo: Steve Parsons
Courtesy of PA Images

exposing her views in public, here we sense the woman behind the crown—inaccessible, and yet someone we identify with and feel affection for.

Warhol produced four versions of the portrait in different colours, with coloured lines drawn on the screenprint of the photograph and overlaid with contrasting patches of geometric colour blocks. Colour in this series has a vivid, chromatic intensity, and our print, produced with a regal blue background, is perhaps the most striking of the four colourways. While the standard edition of this series was a run of 40 prints, this print is from the coveted Royal Edition, a smaller deluxe run of 30 that included crushed glass or “diamond dust,” applied directly to the screenprint. This “diamond dust” was sprinkled into the outlines of the portraits, allowing them to glimmer and sparkle in the light, lending an especially magnificent impression when viewed in person.

Three decades later, the Queen’s true approval of the portfolio was revealed when in May 2012, during the year of her Diamond Jubilee, the Royal Collection acquired Warhol’s suite of four prints from the deluxe edition of 30 with diamond dust.

Later that year, the prints were exhibited at Windsor Castle in the exhibition titled *The Queen: Portraits of a Monarch* (figure 3). They were the only portraits she owned that she did not herself commission and pose for.

The limited edition catalogue for Warhol’s *Reigning Queens* series, published by George Mulder, Amsterdam, accompanies this lot. Also included is a copy of the purchase invoice from Martin Lawrence Galleries.

This work is from the Royal Edition of 30, with 5 artist’s proofs, 2 printer’s proofs, and 2 Hors Commerce in the total edition. R is marked before each number. The printer is Rupert Jasen Smith, New York, and the publisher is George C.P. Mulder, Amsterdam.

ESTIMATE: \$200,000 – 300,000