

Hands On Learning *with Reading Museum Service*

HOLBEIN DRAWINGS & TUDOR COSTUME A39/A

The pictures in this box are copies of drawings made by Hans Holbein the younger (1497-1543). He was born in Augsburg, Germany, and brought up in Basel, Switzerland. His father was an artist and trained the young man in the skills of his craft. The self-portrait on the right is thought to show him in 1542/3, just before his death.

Holbein made two visits to England in 1526-8 and 1532-43. He died in London, possibly of the plague. While residing in England, Holbein made a living from a variety of artistic activities, including wall paintings and designs for metalwork, but the bulk of his surviving work consists of painted portraits and the drawings that were made as preparation for them. His clients were merchants, churchmen, ambassadors, courtiers and King Henry VIII himself - the wealthy, upper class of English society. He was referred to as the 'King's painter' in 1536 and received a regular salary from the King from 1537.



On his first visit to England Holbein painted the famous group portrait of Sir Thomas More and his family (left). The original painting was destroyed in the eighteenth century, but fortunately a number of copies were made. When he returned to England for his second visit many of the people he had painted had fallen from power, including More, who was executed in 1535.

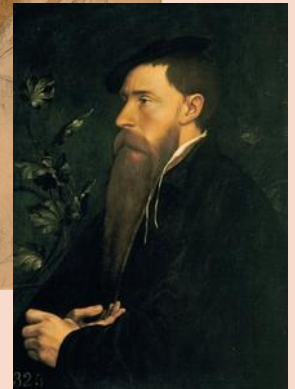
Holbein's skill, however, meant there was a demand for his work from the new people who had found favour with Henry VIII.

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Eighty-five of Holbein's drawings survive in the Royal Collection at Windsor. The drawings from the first visit are in black, white and coloured chalks on plain paper, while those from the second visit are chalk and ink on pink primed paper.

The drawings were made as a preparation for painted portraits. Several of the portraits that were made from these drawings still exist. The portrait painted from the drawing of William Reskimer can be seen on the right. In some cases, no portrait exists and may never have been made. In others, there are portraits, but no surviving drawings.



The Reskimer portrait follows the drawing very closely. This is because Holbein's usual method was to place the drawing over a sheet of paper, the back of which had been covered with black chalk. In effect, the second sheet was the equivalent of a modern piece of carbon-paper. The two sheets were then laid on a prepared panel. Holbein then traced over his drawing with a sharp metal point and the design was imprinted onto the panel. Many of the drawings have score marks on them, in some cases obliterating the drawn lines underneath.

Several of the drawings have the names of colours written onto the clothing as a guide to the artist when he came to creating a painted portrait from them. The language used is German, but the drawing of Mary Zouch (see page 3)

includes the word 'black felbert', which suggests Holbein was familiar with English.



Left: The drawing and portrait of Sir Richard Southwell. Southwell came to power under Thomas Cromwell. He played an active part in getting Sir Thomas More condemned and assisted in the prosecution of his childhood friend the Earl of Surrey. During the reign of Elizabeth he fell out of favour for, oddly, declaring himself a Roman Catholic. The drawing shows the marks of the metal point used to trace it.

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In 1590 it is known that the drawings were kept in a 'great booke'. They are described as showing 'certyne Lordes, Ladyes, gentlemen and gentlewomen in King Henry the 8: his tyme, their names subscribed by Sr John Cheke Secretary to King Edward the 6'. Cheke had served as tutor to Prince Edward from 1542 and could have known both Holbein and many of the people portrayed.

Sixty-nine of the eighty-five drawings have been given names. Most of the unidentified pictures seem to be from the time of Holbein's first visit to England. Cheke was not at court during this period. However, the situation is complicated by the fact that the inscriptions that we can see on the drawings today are not those by Sir John Cheke, but were added in the eighteenth century. Cheke's original identifications may have been on the backing paper of the 'great booke' in which they were stored. In any case, Cheke has got some of the identifications wrong. For example, the drawings marked 'Thomas Earl of Surrey' are in fact of Henry his son.



Whatever the case, Holbein's pictures have fascinated people ever since they were drawn. Even more than the paintings, they seem to capture their sitters with a startling realism. Looking at them we catch a glimpse of the world of Henry VIII's court free, for a moment, of the glitz and glamour of Hollywood films and BBC TV-serials. The faces of individuals who lived 500 years ago and who, in many cases, died a bloody death during one of Henry VIII's purges, are shown to be not so very different from those of ourselves.

Top left: A drawing labelled 'Anna Bolleyn Queen'. However, this identification has been much disputed and is still not certain.

Right: Lady Margaret Elyot and her husband Sir Thomas - in this case there is no dispute about the identity of the people shown!



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The drawing labelled M. Zouch could refer to Mary Zouch, or it could simply be mistress Zouch in which case it could be any female member of the Zouch family! Mary Zouch was lady-in-waiting to Henry VIII's third wife, Jane Seymour. Another suggestion is that the drawing shows Anne Gainsford, who was lady-in-waiting to Anne Boleyn. Her married name was Zouche. Notice the writing on the front of the dress. These were notes made by Holbein to remind himself that the dress was made of black velvet.



The replica clothes in the box are based on those in the drawing of M. Zouch. She is wearing an Anne Boleyn style French hood, decorated with gold braid and a black linen train hanging down. Look closely at her elbows and you will notice the sleeves of her gown are folded back to show the rich fabric lining like the gown in the box.



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The Lady Marchioness of Dorset was the mother of Lady Jane Grey, who was Queen for nine days in July 1553. Her name was Lady Frances Brandon before she married Henry Grey, Marquess of Dorset. She is described as a strong and dominant woman, perhaps something she inherited from her uncle Henry VIII. She was ambitious for her daughter Jane and pushed her to become the Queen of England once Edward VI had died. Her daughter was executed in 1554 along with her husband Henry. It is said that she wouldn't visit or write to her daughter whilst she was in the Tower of London awaiting her death, and she didn't plead for her to be pardoned. Just three weeks later Frances married again, this time to Adrian Stokes.



The Holbein drawing shows a calm, gentle face - very different to the descriptions of her character!

The lady with the fancy black hat is Mary FitzRoy, Duchess of Richmond. She married Henry FitzRoy in November 1533, who was the Duke of Richmond and Somerset. Henry was the illegitimate child of Henry VIII and was the only one he ever acknowledged, although it is known that he had several others. Mary's family had ambitions to increase their standing by marrying their daughter into nobility, but unfortunately Henry FitzRoy died just four years later at the age of 17. Although she remained at court after becoming a widow, she never remarried and never held another position of power - much to the disappointment of her family.



Again, look at the notes made by Holbein to remind himself of the fabric and colour of the clothing.

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Lady Monteagle was the first wife of Thomas Stanley, 2nd Lord Monteagle. Her name was Mary Brandon before she married Thomas and she was the daughter of Charles Brandon - a life-long friend of Henry VIII. Interestingly, she has the same father as the Lady Marchioness of Dorset, whose drawing is also in this box. They were half sisters.

