Technicolour Dickens: The Living Image of Charles Dickens


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Technicolour Dickens: The Living Image of Charles Dickens
25 July 2020 - 25 April 2021

CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM TO RE-OPEN ON SATURDAY 25 JULY WITH

TECHNICOLOUR DICKENS

- SPECTACULAR NEW EXHIBITION TO PRESENT DICKENS AS HE ACTUALLY WAS
- Advance booking now at dickensmuseum.com
- Vivid suite of colour photographic portraits created following research into original photo sessions, Dickens’s clothes and the skin tone of his descendants
- Exhibition to feature the only known pieces of Dickens’s clothing in existence
- Museum calls on Londoners and UK visitors to come to the author’s home

The Charles Dickens Museum is delighted to announce that no. 48 Doughty Street, Dickens’s only surviving London house, will be open for visitors once again from 10am on Saturday 25 July thanks to support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Following four months of enforced closure due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Museum will re-open with a new exhibition that will bring visitors closer than ever before to the real Charles Dickens.

Technicolour Dickens: The Living Image of Charles Dickens will run from 25 July 2020 to 25 April 2021. The exhibition will show how images of Dickens were consumed and circulated as soon as he found fame, throughout his career and after his death. It will bring together a dizzying array of
depictions of Dickens, as well as clothing, personal items and descriptions by those who knew and saw him, to reveal Dickens as he actually was and to explore the enduring power of his image.

The exhibition will present a wealth of images of Dickens, from the earliest painting of the author at the age of 18 to the final, posthumous, drawing by John Everett Millais, created the day after Dickens’s death.

It will culminate in a new, vivid suite of colour photographic portraits. Eight historic photographs from the Museum’s collection were selected for colourisation. The Museum researched the details of each original portrait session, the clothes and accessories chosen by Dickens for each and the objects included in the original photographs. The process also involved photography and study of the complexion and skin tone of two of Dickens’s great-great grandsons, Gerald Dickens and Mark Dickens, in conditions akin to the original photography sessions to ensure that the colourisation is as accurate as possible.

The new photography and colourisation has been conducted by London-based portrait and still life photographer, Oliver Clyde.

A star exhibit will be a black silk grosgrain waistcoat made in 1860 and worn by Dickens. This item is held in a private collection and has not been on public display for over 100 years. The waistcoat will be displayed along with the dark woollen Court Suit worn by Dickens when meeting Edward, Prince of Wales at St James’s Palace on 6 April 1870. These are the only known pieces of Dickens’s clothing in existence.

Frankie Kubicki, curator at the Charles Dickens Museum, said, “We aim to present an image of Dickens that the public have never seen before. Dickens adored fashion and Technicolour Dickens will highlight his personal style and often daring fashion tastes. We have spent many months exploring the details of Dickens’s clothes, tailors and textiles, the choices he made when creating images to be shared with his readers and the reactions of those that came into contact with him. The result builds a picture of a stylish, image-conscious, charismatic presence. Now that we are able to open the Museum again, we’re itching to share this new vision of Charles Dickens with our visitors.”

Cindy Sughrue, Director of the Charles Dickens Museum, said, “We are extremely pleased to be opening the Museum once again, especially as Technicolour Dickens will begin its run on the same day. The past few months have presented us all with many challenges and we still have some hard work ahead of us to secure the future of the Museum. Ordinarily, around half of our visitors come from abroad but with few international visitors expected this summer, we are hoping that people from across the UK will choose this moment to come here. Dickens was a man of the people, a man
of the world, and primarily a man of London - a city that he campaigned for, supported and immortilised. We hope that Londoners will support the legacy of one of its most famous sons by visiting his home and ensuring that it is preserved for generations to come.”

Taking in celebrated portraits by Daniel Maclise, Samuel Laurence, Alfred d’Orsay and William P. Frith, the exhibition will also include the exquisite ‘lost portrait’ of Dickens painted by Margaret Gillies (1803-1887) over six sittings in 1843, when Dickens was 31 years old and writing A Christmas Carol. In 2017, the portrait miniature, covered in mould, was discovered in an auction of household goods in South Africa and after conservation and provenance research by Philip Mould & Company in London, was acquired by the Museum in 2019.

Descriptions of Dickens by his family and friends, as well as accounts by fans and theatre audiences, will bring us closer to the man himself:

- **Elizabeth Worneley, who met Dickens at a dinner in Boston in 1842**: ‘He had brought with him two velvet waistcoats, one of vivid green, the other brilliant crimson; these were further ornamented by a profusion of gold watch-chain. In 1841, a black satin waistcoat was almost the national costume of the gentlemen in America: so that Dickens’s vivid tints were very conspicuous.’

- **Prime Minister Lord John Russell’s daughter, Georgina**: ‘In the evening, I remember, he was conspicuous, owing to wearing a pink shirt-front embroidered with white, but a genius can always wear whatever he chooses.’

- **William Makepeace Thackeray, May 1843**: ‘how splendid Mrs. Dickens was in pink satin and Mr. Dickens in geranium and ringlets.’

However, not everybody was bowled over by Dickens’s appearance. Richard Henry Dana Jnr went to see Dickens on his 1842 American tour and noted in his journal: ‘Disappointed in D.’s appearance. We have heard him called “the handsomest man in London” &c. He is of the middle height (under if anything) with a large expressive eye, regular nose, matted, curling, wet-looking black hair, a dissipated looking mouth with a vulgar draw to it, a muddy olive complexion, stubby fingers & a hand by no means patrician, a hearty, off-hand manner, far from well-bred, & a rapid, dashing way of talking […] there is a fascination about him which keeps your eyes on him, yet you cannot get over the impression that he is a low bred man.’

The **Charles Dickens Museum is at 48 Doughty Street**, the London residence where Dickens wrote Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby (the first of his books to carry an illustration of Dickens), completed The Pickwick Papers and began Barnaby Rudge.
Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “Heritage has an essential role to play in making communities better places to live, supporting economic regeneration and benefiting our personal wellbeing. All of these things are going to be even more important as we emerge from this current crisis. Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players we are pleased to be able to lend our support to organisations such as the Charles Dickens Museum during this uncertain time.”

Technicolour Dickens has been created by the Museum in conjunction with associate co-curators Dr Leon Litvack (Reader, School of Arts, English and Languages, Queen’s University, Belfast) and Professor Julian North (Associate Professor in Nineteenth-Century English Literature, University of Leicester). The exhibition and its engagement programme have been supported by grants from Arts Council England and Art Fund.

MUSEUM INFORMATION
The Charles Dickens Museum, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX
More information: www.dickensmuseum.com 020 7405 2127 events@dickensmuseum.com

Notes to Editors:
1. Charles Dickens Museum
The Charles Dickens Museum is the world’s most comprehensive repository of material related to Charles Dickens. It is located at 48 Doughty Street, London, the home of Charles Dickens and his family in the late 1830s. While living here, Dickens completed The Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby, alongside editing Bentley’s Miscellany.

With a rich collection of over 100,000 items spanning the whole of Dickens’s life and beyond, a research library & archive, an education programme, university partnerships, public events and a series of changing special exhibitions, the Museum acts as a hub for the study and appreciation of Dickens’s life and work. The collection includes furniture, personal effects, letters, manuscripts, rare editions, paintings, prints, and photographs. Doughty Street is a place of pilgrimage for people from all over the world – fans, scholars, researchers, writers – and it is a place of learning for thousands of children and young people.

2. The National Lottery Heritage Fund
Using money raised by the National Lottery, we inspire, lead and resource the UK’s heritage to create positive change for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk #NationalLotteryHeritageFund
The Heritage Emergency Fund remains open for applications for grants ranging from £3,000 to £250,000 until 31 July 2020. Extra advice and support and longer-term skills and capacity building initiatives has also been made available for the heritage sector. Read more about The National Lottery Heritage Fund’s response to the Covid-19 emergency.

About the National Lottery
• Since The National Lottery’s first draw took place on 19 November 1994, more than £40 billion has been raised for good causes in the areas of art, sport, heritage and community.
• National Lottery players contribute around £30 million to good causes every week.
• The National Lottery has made more than 5,500 millionaires but its primary purpose is giving to good causes – over 565,000 individual grants have been awarded across the UK, that’s the equivalent of 200 life-changing projects in every UK postcode district.

For further information and images, please contact Michael Barrett on 020 8295 2424, 07813-558772 or mb@thepressoffice.uk.com