



PAINTING HISTORY DELAROCHE AND LADY JANE GREY

24 February – 23 May 2010
Sainsbury Wing, Admission charge

"I am assured that I shall, for losing of a mortal life, win an immortal life."
(Lady Jane Grey, February 1554)

Since its rediscovery in 1973 and first exhibition at the National Gallery two years later, Paul Delaroche's *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey*, 1833, has become one of the nation's best-loved paintings. For the first time, *Painting History* examines this iconic masterpiece in the context of Delaroche's great historical paintings, particularly the poignant scenes from English history which made his reputation.

The exhibition features seven major international loans of paintings by Delaroche including *The Princes in the Tower*, 1830 and *Young Christian Martyr*, 1854–5 (both Louvre) and *Strafford on his way to Execution*, 1835 (private collection). Displayed alongside are Delaroche's expressive preparatory drawings for *Lady Jane* and a selection of comparative paintings and prints by his contemporaries, including Eugène Lami, Claude Jacquand and François-Marius Granet.

Monumental in scale, poignant in subject matter and uncanny in its realism, Delaroche's depiction of the 17-year-old, who was Queen of England for just nine days, created a sensation when first unveiled at the Paris Salon of 1834. It appeared to usher in an entirely new form of painting. But what inspired a French artist in the 1830s to depict the final moments of a 16th-century English queen? In post-revolutionary France, artists began to combine monarchist sympathies with a Romantic interest in English literature and history. After the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, a generation of artists including Delaroche, Bonington and Lami found inspiration in Shakespeare, Byron and, above all, Walter Scott. Yet for Delaroche, English history provided a still more powerful muse. In a society deeply scarred by the violent upheavals of the French Revolution, English history presented remarkable parallels with recent events in French history – particularly the execution of Lady Jane Grey, the death of the princes in the Tower, the English Civil War and the regicide of Charles I.

Delaroche (1797–1856) first visited England and possibly Scotland in 1822 but returned to London five years later to prepare for his work on *The Princes in the Tower*, 1830 (Louvre). It is probable he visited the Tower of London itself, an experience which may have moved him to develop his two further Tower compositions: *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey*, 1833 (National Gallery, London) and *Strafford on his Way to Execution*, 1835 (private collection).

Like many of his peers, Delaroche showed a keen interest in the themes of usurpation and martyrdom. In Cromwell and Charles I, 1831 (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nîmes), the artist depicts a sombre Cromwell contemplating the corpse of his enemy, the executed Charles. Always veiled in myth, the death of Lady Jane Grey (1537–1554) gave Delaroche his most poignant symbolic subject. Grey inherited the English crown amid a bitter political crisis following the death of Edward VI on 6 July 1553. Her reign ended on 19 July when Mary, her Catholic cousin and rival to the throne, led a successful counter-coup. Together with her young husband, Jane stood trial for treason. They were sentenced to death and Jane was re-imprisoned in the Tower, where she firmly resolved to become a Protestant martyr. She was beheaded on 12 February 1554. The events of that day have been fiercely debated ever since.

In Delaroche's depiction, Jane is shown blindfolded and feeling for the executioner's block. While emotionally the most compelling, this version of events owes more to 16th-century propaganda than to historical fact. Within six months of Jane's death, her Protestant allies had her reinvented as an innocent martyr and victim of Catholic tyranny. In London, a dossier of doctored papers was soon in circulation, complete with the pathos of her groping for the block. Capturing the psychological moment of greatest intensity, Delaroche gave the Lady Jane myth an irresistible and seemingly unshakeable appeal. Appearing from the shadows in a dress of startling virgin white, she becomes the very apotheosis of female innocence.

Delaroche's image was a striking reminder, for those with memories of recent French history, of the fates of Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette and the Dauphin. Delaroche undoubtedly made such associations in his own mind, as is suggested by a sheet of studies in which thumbnail drawings for *Lady Jane* appear alongside a composition of the Dauphin and his sister, before July 1830 (Louvre). Towards the end of his life, Delaroche completed a startling memorial to France's executed queen in *Marie-Antoinette before the Tribunal*, 1851 (The Forbes Collection, New York).

Throughout the exhibition, *Painting History* examines the singular intensity of Delaroche's historical paintings in light of his close relationship with the theatre. From the 1820s, there was an increasing tendency in French theatre to draw on pictorial forms, and for plays to be divided into so-called 'tableaux' as well as acts. This new kind of theatre had a profound influence on Delaroche, who was also keenly receptive to the spatial possibilities offered by stage craft. Meanwhile, his own work lent itself to dramatic recreation and on several occasions, his paintings were represented on the stage, including *Lady Jane Grey* and *The Princes in the Tower*. By the time he was painting *Lady Jane*, Delaroche had also become romantically involved with Mademoiselle Anaïs, an actress now thought to be his model for the queen. A newly discovered portrait of Anaïs in coloured chalk, 1832 (private collection) is displayed here for the first time.

The exhibition also demonstrates how French and British artists such as Edouard Cibot (*Anne Boleyn in the Tower of London*, shortly after her Arrest, 1835, Musée Rolin, Autun), Jean-Léon Gérôme (*The Execution of Marshal Ney*, 1868, Museums Sheffield) and Jean-Paul Laurens (*The Hostages*, 1896, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon) continued to work in a manner directly inspired by Delaroche's pioneering depictions.

A Masterpiece Recovered: Delaroche's Charles I Insulted

Room 1 (Admission free)

24 February – 23 May 2010

An accompanying Room 1 exhibition presents, for the very first time, Delaroche's recently recovered *Charles I Insulted by Cromwell's Soldiers*, 1837 (private collection). This monumental painting was damaged by shrapnel in the bombing of Bridgewater House in London during the Blitz. The canvas was immediately rolled up and evacuated to the Scottish Borders where it has remained ever since. Safely recovered and presently in the time-consuming process of conservation, but yet to be fully restored, the painting retains its war wounds for all to see. At the same time, Delaroche's scene remains entirely legible and has lost none of its emotive intensity. *For further information, a separate press release is available.*

For further press information please contact Thomas Almeroth-Williams at thomas.almerothwilliams@ng-london.org.uk or 020 7747 2512.

Images

Publicity images for *Painting History* can be obtained from <http://press.ng-london.org.uk>. To obtain a username please contact the National Gallery Press Office on 020 7747 2865 or email press@ng-london.org.uk

Additional information

Organisation

Painting History: Delaroche and Lady Jane Grey is organised by the National Gallery, London and is curated by Linda Whiteley and Stephen Bann, with Christopher Riopelle and Anne Robbins as coordinating curators. Linda Whiteley is a research associate in History of Art, University of Oxford. Stephen Bann is Emeritus Professor and Senior Research Fellow in History of Art, University of Bristol. Christopher Riopelle is Curator of Post-1800 Paintings at the National Gallery, London. Anne Robbins is Assistant Curator of Post-1800 Paintings at the National Gallery, London.

Publication

Painting History: Delaroche and Lady Jane Grey
By Stephen Bann and Linda Whiteley, with essays by John Guy, Christopher Riopelle and Anne Robbins.

The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated book that presents *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey* with other large history paintings and preparatory sketches that made Delaroche's reputation. In this groundbreaking study, authors discuss the influence of varied visual material – such as popular prints and theatre – on his particular approach to depicting English history. An essay by John Guy, the distinguished Tudor historian, outlines the short life of Lady Jane Grey, Queen of England for only nine days, and her enduring mythical status as an innocent martyr.

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Dates and opening hours

Press view: 23 February 2010, 10.30am–1.30pm
Open to public: 24 February 2010 – 23 May 2010

Daily 10am–6pm, Friday until 9pm
Last admission 5.15pm (8.15pm Friday)

Admission

Enter by the Sainsbury Wing Entrance.

Full price	£8
Senior/Concession/Disabled visitors	£7
Carers	FREE
Job seeker/Student/Art Fund	£4
Family (2 adults and ≤4 children)	£16
Under 12s	FREE

Season Ticket	£20
Senior/Disabled Season	£18
Job seeker/Art Fund/ Student Season	£10

Tickets

For advance tickets to *Painting History* please visit www.nationalgallery.org.uk (booking fee).
You can also book tickets by post and in person from the Gallery.

For public information, please contact 020 7747 2885 or information@ng-london.org.uk