

PRESS RELEASE

Zuleika Gallery presents a new art exhibition at Blenheim Palace: 'Cecil Beaton and the Theatre'
From 12 June – 31 August 2021



Zuleika Gallery is proud to present *Cecil Beaton and the Theatre*, 12 June – 31 August 2021, the first of a series of new art exhibitions the gallery will present at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire. The inaugural exhibition presents original works by celebrated British photographer and designer Cecil Beaton, and his contemporaries, and will coincide with the Cecil Beaton photography exhibition *Celebrating Celebrity* taking place inside the palace.

Sir Cecil Beaton (1904 – 1980) was a photographer and illustrator known primarily for his stylish portraits of actors and film stars of his time. Beaton's great love for the theatre inspired the sets he created for his photography and he soon made a step into stage design. Beaton's theatre designs began to take precedence over his photography practice after the Second World War, when he created numerous costumes and set designs for ballets, opera, plays and film productions. His designs were elegant, romantic and opulent, often set in the Edwardian and pre-war period of his childhood, exemplified by his greatest stage success, 'My Fair Lady', in 1956.

Cecil Beaton and The Theatre, presented in a new dedicated exhibition space located inside Blenheim Palace, will centre on a collection of Cecil Beaton's work relating to theatrical productions of the 1950s. This decade accounted for some of his most memorable designs for the stage, including a significant body of work for great figures in the world of ballet such as Frederick Ashton and George Balanchine and includes his iconic work on the play and film of Lerner and Loewe's musical 'My Fair Lady'. As well as original designs for some of the most celebrated productions Beaton worked on in the 1950s, including 'Love's Labour's Lost' and 'Picnic at Tintagel', is work by other key figures and contemporaries from around the same time, amongst them John Piper (1903 – 1992), Ethelbert White (1891 – 1972), John Armstrong (1893 – 1973) Glynn Boyd Harte, (1948 – 2003), Christian Berard (1902 – 1949) and Dimitri Bouchene (1893 – 1993).

Beaton is also placed within his wider context, working as a leading artist during some of the most pioneering and innovative decades in the history of British design. The exhibition includes one of Beaton's earliest set designs from the *Duchess of Malfi*, created in 1924, and also examines the extraordinary influence of Diaghilev's Ballet Russes following their arrival in Britain in around 1920. Impressions of these ballets from the time by Ethelbert White and Michel Sevier are complimented by tributes to the company's great star, Vaslav Nijinsky, in album cover designs by Glyn Boyd Harte from the other end of the century.

Work by Beaton's contemporaries will include watercolours of sets and costumes by John Armstrong for the director Alexander Korda and a collection of designs by his friend John Piper. Piper was one of the first of his contemporaries to praise Beaton's remarkable work on a ballet based on Benjamin Britten's song cycle "Les Illuminations". Alongside two designs by Beaton for this production is a spectacular set design by Piper for Britten's last opera, "Death in Venice" and a collage backdrop design for the composer's only ballet "The Prince of the Pagodas". A very special addition to the exhibition is an original portrait of Cecil Beaton by fellow artist Augustus John, which has been lent by a private collection, as well as a rare portrait by Beaton of Mrs Wallis Simpson lent by a private collection, and a portrait of Gladys Deacon, Duchess of Marlborough, by Beaton, from the Blenheim Palace collection.

Cecil Beaton and The Theatre is curated by Lizzie Collins and Hannah Payne of Zuleika Gallery, in association with Harry Moore Gwyn. Zuleika Gallery is pleased to also collaborate with Joanna Ling, ceramicist and former Head of the Cecil Beaton Archive at Sotheby's.

Hannah Payne, Senior Director, Zuleika Gallery comments: "*We are thrilled to present 'Cecil Beaton and the Theatre' at Blenheim Palace. This exhibition puts Beaton in his context as a key figure in one of the most exciting periods in the history of British design. Having recently opened our second gallery in nearby Woodstock, it's a great privilege to present art exhibitions at Blenheim Palace for the enjoyment of visitors.*"

Kate Ballenger, Keeper of Palace and Collections at Blenheim Palace comments: "*We're delighted to welcome Zuleika Gallery to present this exciting exhibition in our new exhibition space to highlight the work of Beaton as a designer for stage and screen, alongside our exhibition of Cecil Beaton's photography throughout the State Rooms, and will be of great interest to visitors to the palace*"

For more information visit zuleikagallery.com

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Image credits: Left, Cecil Beaton (1904 – 1980) *John Neville's Costume for Berowne, Love's Labour's Lost*, 1954. Watercolour over ink, 43.5 by 31 cm. Courtesy of Zuleika Gallery and Harry Moore Gwyn

Right, Augustus John O.M., R.A. 1878-1961, *Portrait of Sir Cecil Beaton*, 1952, charcoal and coloured chalk, 43 x 30.5 cm. Private collection U.K. courtesy of Zuleika Gallery.

For more information and images please contact Zuleika Gallery: info@zuleikagallery.com

About Zuleika Gallery

Zuleika Gallery was founded in Oxford in 2015 by Lizzie Collins and focuses on Contemporary and Modern British Art, with locations based in Woodstock, Oxfordshire and also in St James's in London. Artists represented by the gallery include Trevor Sutton, Manijeh Yadegar, Andy Barker, Rachel Gracey, Claudia Clare and Frances Aviva Blane. Lizzie Collins is a History of Art graduate of UCL, and a postgraduate of the Courtauld Institute in London. Lizzie was a director and auctioneer at Bonhams, and a specialist at Christie's in 20th Century British Art, before founding Zuleika Gallery. In 2016 Lizzie set up the art programme for Saïd Business School, University of Oxford where she has curated exhibitions by Nigel Hall RA, Nicola Green and Alice Kettle. Hannah Payne joined Zuleika Gallery as Senior Director in 2020 following a career background of 20 years at leading institutions and art businesses including Blenheim Palace, Royal Academy of Arts, and Olympia International Art & Antiques Fairs. Hannah has directed art programmes at leading art sector businesses in London developing exhibitions with emerging and mid-career artists, as well as consulting for contemporary art galleries. Hannah is on the Advisory Board of University of the Arts London's *Made in Arts London*, a non-profit organisation supporting graduating artists.

For the *Cecil Beaton and the Theatre* exhibition in 2021, Zuleika Gallery will partner with Harry Moore-Gwyn. Harry Moore-Gwyn founded Moore-Gwyn Fine Art Limited in 2007 and specialises in paintings, drawings and sculpture by British artists, with a particular focus on the period from c.1870 to the middle part of the twentieth century. His work as a curator has included Kenneth Rowntree (Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden and Pallant House, Chichester), Walter Bonner Gash (Alfred East Gallery, Kettering) and Henry Lamb (Salisbury Museum), his catalogue for which (*Henry Lamb: Out of the Shadows*) was published by Paul Holberton in 2018. Zuleika Gallery is also presenting '*Expressions of Nature*' an exhibition featuring Oxfordshire artists in the Gardens Gallery Café at Blenheim Palace from 17 May - 12 September, and *Brave New World*, a solo exhibition by Stuart Hartley from 19 May – 15 June in its Woodstock Gallery.

For further information, price list, or images please contact info@zuleikagallery.com or visit www.zuleikagallery.com

Cecil Beaton and The Theatre coincides with the Cecil Beaton photography exhibition *Celebrating Celebrity* is taking place inside Blenheim Palace from 5 June – 31 August 2021. For more information about Blenheim Palace visit www.blenheimpalace.com

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