

New portrait of Queen to go on first class stamps

Artist Nicky Philipps admits to 'high pressure' job after accepting commission from Royal Mail to paint Queen Elizabeth II

Mark Brown, arts correspondent
The Guardian, Thursday 30 May 2013 15.57 BST



Nicky Philipps' portrait of the Queen in the Chinese drawing room at Buckingham Palace. Photograph: Royal Mail/Rex Features
Click for full image

Nicky Philipps concedes that negative comments are part of the deal when you paint the most painted woman in the world. "You can't please everyone and there's a bit of 'it's appalling', 'it's dreadful' already – but I would like to invite those people to come and look at it in the flesh."

Philipps was speaking in front of an enormous and striking portrait of the Queen unveiled on Thursday and commissioned by the Royal Mail. It will feature on a first class stamp to mark the 60th anniversary of the Queen's coronation.

Or a small part of it will. While the Queen's head is on the stamp, Philipps' portrait is full length, showing her wearing Order of the Garter robes at Buckingham Palace with two corgis and two dorgis snapping at her feet.

"It's wonderful to be on the stamp and it's an honour but it's also disappointing when you know it's a huge picture to have just one little bit highlighted," said Philipps.

The artist, whose portrait of princes William and Harry hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, had three hour-long sittings with the Queen in the Chinese drawing room at Buckingham Palace.

"She was very calm... and knows exactly what she's supposed to do – she's very good at manoeuvring herself back into position."

Painting the Queen had long been an ambition, Philipps said. "It was a very high-pressure job but it was good fun. It is a big deal and you feel pressure to get it right. I don't want to be unkind, I don't want to over-flatter, I just want to get it right."

More than 130 artists have painted the monarch and it can be a thankless task. Earlier this month Dan Llywelyn Hall had his portrait unveiled at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff; it attracted a deluge of criticism to the point that the artist admitted being shocked at the viciousness of tweets and other messages.

A similar backlash is not expected against Philipps' portrait, but she said she would still love people to come and see it before casting their verdict. For now that is only possible by visiting the Fine Art Commissions gallery in central London where it will hang in a show of Philipps' work from 5-28 June.

The painting is being gifted to the royal collection, so where it hangs after that remains to be seen.

Share Tweet +1 Share Email

Share 41
Tweet 25
+1 2
Share 0
Email

Article history

Art and design
Stamps · Design · Painting · Art

UK news
The Queen · Monarchy · Royal Mail · Postal service

More news

Related

29 May 2013
Goldman Sachs and UBS to lead privatisation of Royal Mail

26 May 2013
Britain's monarchy is an invocation of a reactionary past

23 May 2013
Post Office workers to strike for fifth time since Easter over closure plans

22 May 2013
Paint it red: artists find new life in west Cumbria's disused iron ore mine

NEW Colour Collection
PANTENE
With New Strength & Shine for coloured hair
BUY IT NOW

Today's best video



Apple's dirty little tax secret
US senators and tax law professors have accused Apple of multi-billion-dollar tax avoidance

Portsmouth's new Mary Rose museum
Oliver Wainwright visits Portsmouth for a tour of the new Mary Rose museum

Rewilding - an animated guide
George Monbiot asks whether the destruction of the natural world can be reversed?

63 comments

How to dress: animal print in the office
Jess Cartner-Morley shares her definitive guide to wearing animal print in the office

GuardianWitness



Bad subtitles
Are there sloppy subtitles on your favourite TV shows? Share your pictures of subtitling mistakes

Enormous pets
In this week's Top pets assignment, we're looking for the very biggest pets. Have you got a whopper of a whippet? A giant gerbil? Or – who knows – a pet rhinoceros in the back garden?

Manchester: at its best
How would you sum up Manchester in a single photograph? Is there a place, a building, a view or a person that represents the city at its best?

Send us your assignment ideas
Do you have an idea for an assignment you think