

# Queen's House Conference 2018

## Call for Papers

### Elizabeth I: The Armada and Beyond, 1588 to 2018

19–21 April 2018



English School, *The Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I* (c.1590, RMG) Cate Blanchett in 'Elizabeth: The Golden Age' (2007)

In September 2016, Royal Museums Greenwich acquired the Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I. This remarkable work of art has captured widespread attention from its creation until the present day, providing a defining image of what has come to be seen as a critical moment in history: the failed invasion of England by the Spanish Armada in the summer of 1588. This conference will address this moment in time and its consequences both for Elizabeth and her subjects in the immediate aftermath of the Armada and for subsequent generations, as the idea of the Virgin Queen and her great triumph has been shaped and remade throughout history until the present day.

While the image was inspired by a specific event, its complex symbolism embraces issues of monarchy, dynasty, nation and empire in the early modern period. It was designed to be a spectacle of female power and majesty, carefully calibrated to inspire awe and wonder, an impression which has lasted to the present day. Scholars have described the portrait as a definitive representation of the English Renaissance, encapsulating the creativity, ideals and ambitions of the entire Elizabethan era. Equally the portrait has inspired and informed countless representations of Elizabeth I in the visual and performing arts, and across film, theatre and television. It has thus been instrumental in making her one of the most recognizable historical figures for audiences today.

Elizabeth's apparently impressive military record against the forces of tyranny and popery, affirmed through such imagery as the Armada Portrait, became the standard by which her successors were judged. As the seventeenth century progressed, the myth of 'Good Queen Bess', 'Gloriana' and the Elizabethan 'Golden Age' took hold. At the same time, the idea of 1588 as the moment when Britain began its rise as a major naval and imperial power established itself. The 1588 Armada became synonymous with the menace of invasion and despotism, and victory came to signal a bright future of English/British liberty and ascendancy. Today, Elizabeth continues to be claimed as a role model for politicians and others seeking to associate themselves with the values that she is seen to represent.

This conference will mark the conservation and re-display of the Armada Portrait at the Queen's House, the last remaining building of Greenwich Palace, the birthplace of Elizabeth I and a major royal site for the Tudor and Stuart dynasties. The Queen's House and the collections of Royal Museums Greenwich offer the potential to unpack a range of meanings and contexts for the image, including the domestic and international worlds of the Renaissance period and the resonance of the Spanish Armada within history to the present day. It is hoped that this conference will pick up on these themes, advancing our understanding of the Armada Portrait specifically and Elizabeth I more generally, interrogating popular notions associated with her life and reputation, offering fresh and alternative perspectives.

Some of the themes that might be considered include (but are not limited to):

- Female power and authority
- Female monarchs and consorts as war leaders
- Court culture and patronage post-1588
- Relations with Protestant Europe and reputation as a Protestant heroine
- Her role during and after the Spanish Armada
- Elizabeth in the public eye
- Commemorations of 1588 in Elizabethan culture and beyond
- Relations with the Islamic World, 1588–1603
- Trade and Empire, East and West
- Elizabeth and her biographers
- Representations in historical genre paintings
- Characterizations in film, fiction, opera and theatre
- The reputation of Elizabeth, home and abroad, from 1588 to the present day

We invite submission of abstracts (300 to 400 words) for twenty-minute papers. The deadline for submissions is **1 December 2017**. Please direct queries, if any, to Janet Dickinson: [janet.dickinson@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:janet.dickinson@conted.ox.ac.uk) or Christine Riding: [criding@rmg.co.uk](mailto:criding@rmg.co.uk) and submit proposals and a brief biography to [research@rmg.co.uk](mailto:research@rmg.co.uk).

**Convenors:** Robert Blyth, Christine Riding (Royal Museums Greenwich) and Janet Dickinson (University of Oxford). The conference is hosted by the Royal Museums Greenwich in association with the Society for Court Studies.

