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Striking skull portraits of King Richard III produced using University of Leicester X-rays



Contemporary artist Alexander de Cadenet to unveil new series of skull portraits at exhibition in London from 14-25 April

**All images credit as 'Alexander de Cadenet/ University of Leicester'
Available to download at:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/cjtyihr4pctm9m4/AADJbH0NXOryMQMcfkQn6Eoha?dl=0>

Dramatic new artwork of King Richard III inspired by the discovery by University of Leicester archaeologists is to go on display at an exhibition in London.

Contemporary artist Alexander de Cadenet will unveil the first in a new series of striking skull portraits featuring King Richard III at Andipa Gallery from 14 – 25 April 2016.

The portraits have been produced using University of Leicester X-ray scans of the last Plantagenet king following his discovery by archaeologists beneath a car park in Leicester in 2012. The images have been produced under University of Leicester licence.

A British artist working in various media, De Cadenet is most known for his skull portraits that are set within the tradition of Vanitas - still life artwork which

includes various symbolic objects designed to remind the viewer of their mortality and of the worthlessness of worldly goods and pleasures.

De Cadenet said: "The skulls began in 1996 using medical X-rays as a way to show who the subject was 'inside' as opposed to how they appear on the surface. The portraits challenge the traditional facility of art to keep the life/identity of a subject alive in the minds of future generations - as they present a forensic X-ray record of the subject's remains as opposed to a recognisable likeness of their face.

"For me, Richard III is one of the ultimate skull portraits and I feel honoured to be able to present him using this concept as he is a part of our country's history. I am extremely grateful to the University of Leicester for allowing me access to the X-ray scans, without which this creation would not be possible.

"Furthermore his remains have been discussed and analysed in such scientific detail, I felt he was an extremely appropriate subject to present as his skull is likely the most recognisable and iconic in the world today.

"The idea of a monarch from the middle ages with unimaginable power and signifier of status - and here presented as a skull - he is a most significant *momento mori* embodying the 'vanities' concept and a potent opportunity to question the meaning and ephemeral nature of our lives. Of course Richard III is also a character richly presented in British culture - not just by Shakespeare but also as part of contemporary culture due to the recent discovery of his remains and his reinterment."

Aside from Shakespeare, Richard III has also been represented in other contemporary art forms. A facial reconstruction was commissioned by the Richard III Society and more recently a large photo-mosaic portrait was unveiled on the first anniversary of his reinterment. Both can be found on display at the King Richard III Visitor Centre in Leicester.

Dave Hall, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer at the University of Leicester, said: "Alexander's bold and inventive interpretations of King Richard III break the mould of traditional portraiture by using University of Leicester X-ray scans with personalised elements relating to his character including a crown.

"The discovery by the University has been represented in many different forms including college plays and graphic illustrations. We are pleased that it has had such a profound effect, not just on the scientific and historic communities, but in the arts as well."

De Cadenet added: "The discovery of Richard III is one of the most fascinating and historically significant discoveries of our time. For the University of Leicester to also have been able to prove the remains were his from the genetic information still present in the bones was a scientific triumph of extraordinary magnitude.

"The discovery has contributed in an unprecedented way to the ongoing legacy and story of this subject from history - and that is exactly what I would like my skull portraits to do."

Alexander de Cadenet will produce six different skull portrait versions of King Richard III. The first will be on display as part of his exhibition at Andipa Gallery, 162 Walton Street, London, SW3 2JL from 14 – 25 April.

For more information visit: <http://andipa.com/exhibitions/alexander-de-cadenet/retrospective-book-launch-x-king-richard-iii-skull-portrait>

- The Dig for Richard III was led by the University of Leicester, working with Leicester City Council and in association with the Richard III Society. The originator of the Search project was Philippa Langley of the Richard III Society.

Ends

Notes to editors

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