

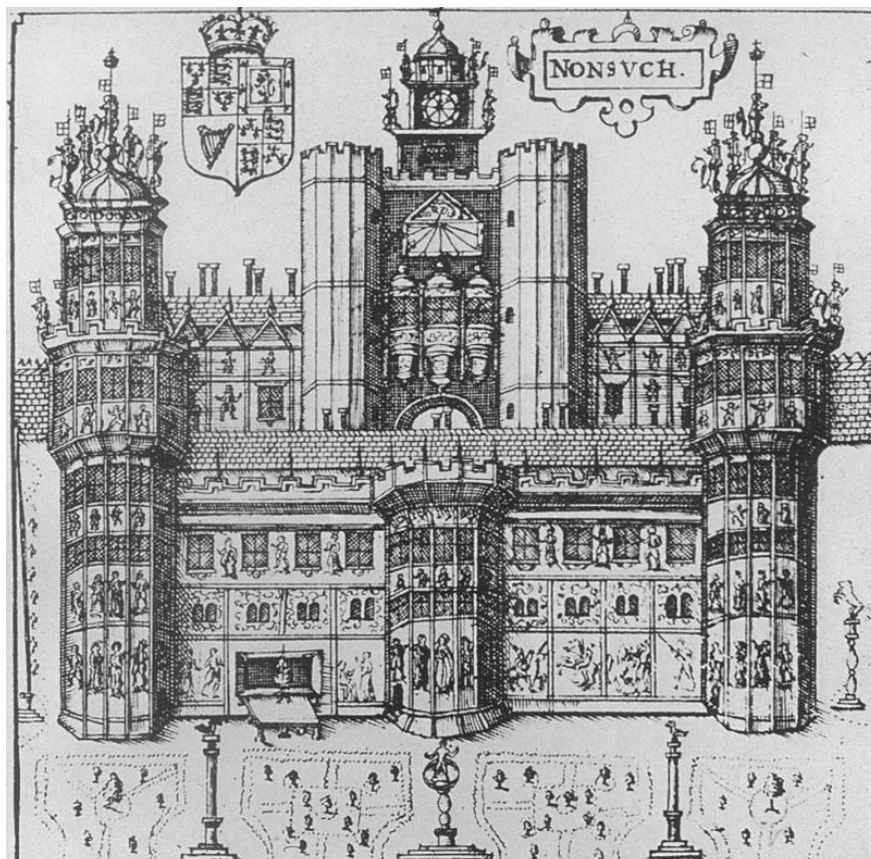
SPECIAL INTEREST DAY – TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2023

To be held in the Dove Suite at The Ark, Turners Hill. Timing 10.00 - 15.00
Subject: Smoke Mirrors and Sanctity - Tudor Patronage and Art as Propaganda
Lecturer: Nicole Mezey BA, MA, FHEA, FRSA

Six wives, phantom pregnancies and a Virgin Queen – in barely 100 years the upstart Tudor dynasty produced some of the great dramatic characters of British history. It also steered the realm into the modern age and virtually invented the art of propaganda through portraits by such artists as Holbein and palaces which outshone the finest of its European rivals. In an age of intense religious conflict, church commissions were followed by the destruction of monasteries and their heritage and, throughout, as monarchs impose their changing allegiances on the people, the arts herald the virtues of their chosen Faiths.

Lecture 1 – The Inherited Throne

In August 1485, Henry Tudor conquered a country torn by civil war for nearly half a century. The new nobility brought in foreign artists to realise their ambitions for Renaissance glory, but the concerns of the king himself were for stability and moral justification and his patronage reflects these distinct objectives. His son, however, was politically and financially secure and determined to enhance his standing through an aura of classical magnificence and discernment. By the time of his death Henry VIII was the possessor of 55 palaces, the largest-ever collection of tapestry, paintings, terracotta, plate and nearly 2,000 books. We look at some of the sumptuous secular creations of Henry VIII and at his incentives to capitalise on the arts.



J Speed, Nonsuch Façade (1610)

Lecture 2 - The Face of the King - Horenbout and Holbein

For nearly a century, Flemish painters like van Eyck and Campin, Italians like Leonardo and Titian had been immortalising their patrons, but Henry VIII had no one to celebrate and disseminate his image until, in the 1520's the Horenbout family brought to his court the most avant garde of European form and style. So successful were they that their contemporary fame was to outshine even the man whose name has become almost synonymous with the royal image, Hans Holbein. We examine and contrast the art of these great portraitists through images of the king and his circle.



Henry VIII – L Horenbout (c1526)



Henry VIII –H Holbein (c1530)

Lecture 3 – “Gloriana”

Elizabeth I was an unlikely monarch. Declared illegitimate at the age of 2, she survived to become not only the longest reigning and most charismatic of Tudor monarchs, but the one who used the arts, and portraiture above all, to weave propaganda. In an age where her gender alone made her an object of suspicion and disdain, “Gloriana” inspired a language of symbols designed to present her as a semi-divine figure, above the limitations of mere human beauty or even mortality, both romantic heroine and the perfect monarch. Through miniatures and large-scale portraits, through pageantry and literature, the exquisite art of the Elizabethan age reflects the language of allusion and mystery created to celebrate the Queen herself.



Elizabeth I – The Rainbow Portrait (1600-1602) M Gheeraerts