

National Portrait Gallery

London



Victorian and Early 20th Century Portraits

The entire first floor of the gallery has been redesigned to show its collection of Victorian and Early 20th Century Portraits. Fortuitously, the original gallery building was Victorian with a mid twentieth century addition – The Duveen Wing. The Victorians are exhibited in rooms either side of a strong central axis where white marble busts on projecting plinths alternate with the standard dark parliamentary portraits of the period, hung on two-tone shot silk.

The effect of joining a party room full of famous people is achieved in the 20th Century part by hanging the portraits across the room on screen walls entirely made of glass. The pictures float in the space of the room, inviting the viewer to look at them as well as other faces, painted and real, beyond. Framing spotlights pick out the pictures and obviate light reflections onto the glass. Existing side windows have been reopened so that daylight falls across the space at right angles to the walls.

Client: National Portrait Gallery



Address
St Martin's Place, London, WC2

Client
National Portrait Gallery

Contract Value
£1 million

Completion Date
September 1996

Main Contractor
Wallis

Silk wall coverings
Mary Fox Linton

Consultants
Structural
Arup
Environmental
Arup

CZWG Team
Mark Freeman