LOT 7
PROPERTY FROM CASTLE HOWARD. FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE EARLS OF CARLISLE
WORKSHOP OF HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER
AUGSBURG 1497/8 - 1543 LONDON
PORTRAIT OF KING HENRY VIII, HALF-LENGTH, WEARING A RICHLY EMBROIDERED RED VELVET SURCOAT, HOLDING A STAFF
inscribed on the staff: H and dated: 1542
oil with gold and silver on oak panel
93 by 68 cm.; 36 1/2 by 26 3/4 in.

ESTIMATE 800,000-1,200,000 GBP
Lot Sold: 965,000 GBP

PROVENANCE
Possibly Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk (1473–1554);
Thence possibly by descent to his great-great-grandson Thomas Howard, 2nd Earl of Arundel (1585–1646), and recorded as a portrait of Henrico octavo in the inventory of the estate of his widow, Alethea, Countess of Arundel in 1654;
Thence possibly by descent to her third son William, 1st Viscount Stafford (1614–1680), Tart Hall, London;
Henry Howard, 4th Earl of Carlisle (1694–1758), probably seen at Carlisle House, Soho, London, and in whose probate inventory of 1759 certainly listed as at Castle Howard;
Thence by descent.

LITERATURE
Possibly the painting of 'Henrico octavo' listed in the Inventory of Pictures, etc., in the Possession of Alethea, Countess of Arundel, at the time of her death at Amsterdam in 1654, London, Public Record Office, DEL 1,7, ff. 693r.–705v.;
4th Earl of Carlisle, Probate Inventory, Ms., 1759, no.109, ‘Henry the 8th. A half Length in a Carv’d & Gilt Frame’;
England Displayed, being a new, complete, and accurate survey and description of the Kingdom of England and Principality of Wales… By a Society of Gentlemen, 1769, p. 147: ‘Holbein, Harry VIII’;
5th Earl of Carlisle, A List of the Best Pictures at Castle Howard not purchased by me, Ms., 1771, p. 7, no. 6;
John Manners, 5th Duke of Rutland, Travels in Great Britain, London 1805, ‘...a Holbein of Henry VIII’;
Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures at Castle Howard, 1st edition, 1805, no. xlii;
5th Earl of Carlisle, Probate Inventory, Ms. 1825, p. 7, Little Breakfast Room;
Georgiana, Countess of Carlisle, Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures, Ms. 1837, p. 24, no. 46, as hanging in the Music Room;
Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures at Castle Howard, 4th edition, 1845, p. 10, no. 106, as hanging in the Music Room;
6th Earl of Carlisle Probate Inventory, Ms. 1849, p. 128, no. 106, Music Room;
G. F. Waagen, Treasures of Art in Great Britain, vol. III, London 1854, p. 323 (as a copy);
7th Earl of Carlisle Probate Inventory, Ms. 1865, p. 171, no. 106, Lower Saloon;
Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures at Castle Howard, 1874, no. 34, Mabeuse Room;
J. Duthie, Manuscript Catalogue of the Pictures at Castle Howard, vol. II, Ms., 1880, no. 24, as hanging in the Mabeuse Room;
Hawkesbury, Catalogue of Portraits and Miniatures at Castle Howard and Naworth Castle, c. 1904, p. 73, no. 67, hanging at Naworth in the Music Room (attributed to Hornebolt [sic]);
Rosalind, 9th Countess of Carlisle, Manuscript catalogue of pictures at Castle Howard, 1918, p. 57, no. 24, as back at Castle Howard in the Dining Room;
L. Jones, Manuscript Catalogue of Pictures at Castle Howard, Castle Howard Ms. 1926, no. 24;
P. Ganz, ‘Henry VIII and his court painter, Hans Holbein’, in Burlington Magazine, vol. LXIII, October 1933, pp. 145–55, reproduced in colour and plates III and IV (as Holbein);
CATALOGUE NOTE

‘I could make seven earls from seven peasants if it pleased me, but I could not make one Hans Holbein, or so excellent an artist, out of seven earls’ (Henry VIII)

This portrait has descended for nearly three hundred years or more in the possession of the Howard family, who were among the most powerful and influential families of the entire Tudor era. In the person of Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk (1473–1554) they boasted one of the most important members of the court of Henry VIII, and in his nieces Anne Boleyn and her cousin Catherine Howard, two of Henry’s six Queens. Painted in 1542, perhaps for the 3rd Duke, this is considered the prototype of the last official image of the King, who was to die in 1547. It is based upon a likeness produced in the workshop of his most famous court artist, Hans Holbein the Younger, one of the greatest of all portrait painters in the 16th century.

By the time this portrait was painted in 1542 Holbein had been in the service of the English crown for fifteen years and a Court painter for six. For all the vicissitudes of the reign of Henry VIII his position as the King’s painter was never undermined or challenged, and indeed he himself had adopted English citizenship in June of the previous year. Though he left no real pupils or worthy imitators, his influence upon portraiture at the English Court was profound, for it was in his time that the concept of the royal portrait as a potent image and symbol of the monarch was first truly developed. In Strong’s words ‘the reign of Henry VIII witnesses the birth of modern royal portraiture and sets the pace for the next 300 years’, and for this he was largely responsible. This likeness of the king was to be the last royal image to issue from Holbein’s studio, for the following autumn he himself had died from the plague in London.

This imposing portrait of the king was also to prove the last official likeness of the King’s reign, for Henry himself was to die only a few years later in 1547. At this date the King was fifty-one, and he is shown at a time when he was increasingly beset by poor health, and when he would have been recovering from the end of his fifth marriage to Catherine Howard (c. 1523–42), whom he had had executed that same winter. Despite this the King’s presence remains formidable and he is unflinching in his gaze. He is shown at half-length in a full-frontal pose, clad in a vermillion velvet surcoat over a doublet of cloth of gold worked with silver, that Holbein has cleverly adopted as a means of disguising the King’s greatly increased weight, which had been brought on by his illness. In his left hand he holds a staff, which at this date he required to walk with, upon which the initial ‘H’ is inscribed and the date of 1542. There is no evidence that the King sat specifically to Holbein for this portrait type, but, as was usual with Holbein’s working methods, his likeness was undoubtedly evolved from an earlier drawing taken from life, which no longer survives.

Despite his privileged position in the service of the Crown, portraits by Holbein himself of Henry VIII are extremely rare, and even those issuing from his studio in his lifetime uncommon. He is first recorded as the King’s painter in

reproduced (as Holbein);
H. A. Schmid, ‘Kann man die Urheberschaft Holbeins den Jüngeren nur auf Grund von Photographieren ablehnen?’, in Prussian Jahrburch, LV, 1934, pp. 126–38 (as not by Holbein);
P. Ganz, ‘Holbein and Henry VIII’, in Burlington Magazine, vol. LXXXIII, November 1943, p. 271 (as Holbein);
H. A. Schmid, Hans Holbein der Jüngere. Sein Austieg zur Meisterschaft und sein Englischer Stil, Basel 1945, pp. 376, 385 (as not by Holbein);
P. Ganz, The Paintings of Hans Holbein, London 1956, pp. 254–55, no. 119, reproduced plate 158 (as Holbein);
R. Salvini and H. W. Grohn, L’Opera Completa di Holbein, Milan 1971, p. 108, no. 135 (as largely workshop of Holbein);
1536, some four years after he had come to England for the second time, and he is recorded as salaried in the Royal Accounts from 1538 onwards. Even if Henry VIII gave him relatively few commissions, they were all highly important. The first and by far the most important surviving portrait of the King is that painted in 1536 when he was already forty-five (fig. 1). Today in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid, this remains Holbein’s undisputed masterpiece from his years in England, and probably the only portrait of Henry made from life, although the original ad vivum drawing which Holbein would undoubtedly have made of the King no longer survives. The likeness was re-used by Holbein for his famous mural of the King with his third wife Jane Seymour and his father Henry Tudor and his wife Elizabeth of York, executed in 1537 for the Privy Chamber of King’s Palace in Whitehall. Although the mural itself was destroyed by fire in 1698, its appearance is known from a seventeenth-century copy made by Remigius van Leemput for Charles II (Royal Collection) and also from the surviving left-hand side of Holbein’s own preparatory cartoon (London, National Portrait Gallery). The Whitehall likeness of the King remains the most potent image of the sovereign, and was copied and repeated in a number of replicas at half or full-length, and in these portraits of the King Holbein had already begun to develop a full-face image of the King’s features. It was used by him again, for example, in his group portrait of Henry VIII with the Barber Surgeons, painted between 1541 and 1543. The original (fig. 3) is still preserved in the Barber-Surgeons’ Hall in London, but has been badly damaged, and may have been largely the work of Holbein’s assistants. Holbein’s preparatory cartoon also survives, today in the collection of the Royal College of Surgeons. The fact that the King now looks directly at the viewer rather than to one side as in the Thyssen portrait suggests the possibility of a new sitting to Holbein around 1540–41, but this is unverified. The Castle Howard portrait, with its full-frontal depiction of the King, is most probably linked to this type, and was to be the final image associated with Holbein’s patterns.

Versions and dating

The Castle Howard portrait of Henry has long been considered to be the prime version of this last image of the King, and indeed has been considered by some scholars to be the work of Holbein himself. Paul Ganz, in his articles on this portrait type, and again in his monograph and catalogue of Holbein’s work, regarded it as the work of Holbein himself and ‘the prototype for the last group of portraits of the King’. This view was not, however, entirely shared by later scholars. Salvini and Grohn were inclined to see it as largely the work of the Holbein studio. Schmid thought the technique close to Holbein but the execution from his workshop at best. Strong considered it the key portrait in the group, and considered the possibility of Horenbout’s authorship. As the face-pattern coincides with that of the final head in the Whitehall Privy Chamber painting, he also discounted the likelihood of another sitting to Holbein. Rowlands, while accepting the primacy of the Castle Howard version, argued that none of the versions could be considered the work of Holbein himself, and indeed doubted whether they were sufficiently homogenous to be regarded as the products of a workshop pattern. The unique presence of the ‘H’ on the Castle Howard panel (fig. 2) has been much debated, and it has been interpreted to stand for both Henry and Holbein, and even led for a while to the panel’s attribution to Holbein’s fellow court painter the Flemish miniaturist Lucas Horenbout (c. 1490–1544). There are a number of versions of this last portrait of the King of varying quality. In addition to the present panel, the best of these include those at Warwick Castle, at Rothesay in the collection of the Marquess of Bute, and that from the collections of the Dukes of Manchester. Further examples of the composition are to be found at Knole, Melbury House, The National Portrait Gallery (fig. 4), the University of Cambridge, the Bethlem Royal Hospital in London, the Moores Foundation at Compton Verney, and at Seaton Delaval, which is dated 1545. A slightly larger pattern, dated 1544 but on canvas and not panel and probably of later date, is at St Bartholomew's Hospital, and a reduced head-and-shoulders copy is at Chatsworth. In all, just over a dozen extant versions survive, but while most may have been painted during or very shortly after the King’s lifetime, in the present state of research only two or three can be shown to have been painted while Holbein was still alive. Of all these types, the Castle Howard panel appears to be the earliest reliably dated example of this composition. Recent dendrochronological analysis of its panels, undertaken by Ian Tyers, shows heartwood rings up to 1533, thus suggesting a felling date around 1540, implying a rapid but
possible use of the panel from 1541 onwards, which fits with the date of 1542 inscribed on the picture. Similar analysis has also been undertaken on the Warwick, ex-Manchester, National Portrait Gallery and Seaton Delaval panels. This shows that two other panels could have an early date prior to Holbein’s death in 1543. These are that from the collection of the Dukes of Manchester, which has a likely use from around 1535 onwards, and that at Warwick, which has panels with an early heartwood date of 1487, but as the panels here are trimmed no more accurate dating can be arrived at, as they could have been re-used at any date. Those at Seaton Delaval and in the National Portrait Gallery date respectively from 1545 and 1547 onwards and so are likely to have been painted during the King’s lifetime or very close to it.

The fact that the portraits are of similar size, and that dated examples and recent existing dendrochronological evidence seems to point to a limited period of production, suggest that the final portrait type of the King was indeed produced from a pattern in Holbein’s workshop. The relatively small number of extant versions might similarly suggest that the type was limited, and ceased to be produced not long after the King’s death. However, the nature of Holbein’s workshop is not known, for no documentary source makes any mention of his apprentices or pupils, and the problem of whether Holbein himself organised the repetition of some of his English portraits is unresolved. That said, recent technical analysis suggests that contemporary versions of the Whitehall portrait type now in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool and Petworth House were painted by artists who had either worked alongside him at Whitehall or who had access to his studio, its cartoons and designs. Holbein’s working technique of using tracings meant that copied drawings or traced patterns could be made of the original portraits of important clients such as the King. A drawing of the frontal facial pattern of the King, possibly connected to the Walker Art Gallery portrait (fig. 5) inscribed by the otherwise unrecorded Hans Swartung survives in Munich, and such a drawing or tracing may have been used for the Castle Howard type of the King. Holbein certainly seems to have used studio assistants at this date to help him execute the very large panel of Henry VIII with the Barber-Surgeons and it is probable that they were entrusted with its completion after his death in 1543.

Provenance
The earliest provenance for the Castle Howard portrait remains unclear. It is first certainly recorded at Castle Howard in 1759, when it is listed in the Probate Inventory of Henry Howard, 4th Earl of Carlisle as: ‘Henry the 8th. A half Length in a Carv’d & Gilt Frame’. The portrait was then accompanied by a companion portrait of Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk: ‘Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk by H. Holbein in ditto frame’. This latter portrait remains in the collections at Castle Howard. The reverse is inscribed: Ex Col. Arund. H. Holbe. P., which would imply that one or both pictures may originally have come from the Arundel Collections. An unsourced note in an old picture catalogue in the Castle Howard archives suggests that both pictures were bought by the 4th Earl of Carlisle at the Arundel House sale in 1720. However, no records for this sale mention either painting, although it is possible that a member of the Howard family may have purchased them separately or afterwards. This provenance would seem to be supported by the fact that George Vertue records in his Note Books for 1736 ‘a ½ length K Hen. 8 in his great Coat and Staf in his hand Hollben – Thomas Duke Norfolk Hen. 8 time’ in the collection of Viscount Morpeth, as the future 4th Earl was then styled. Duthie, in his catalogue of the pictures at Castle Howard made in 1878, also records that the panel, then hanging in the Mabeuse room, had been, ‘purchased by the 4th Earl of Carlisle’. Such a purchase might seem slightly out of character for the 4th Earl, whose interests as a collector were more orientated to the paintings and antiquities of Italy, but neither he nor his father would have overlooked an opportunity to acquire portraits of their ancestors for the programme of decoration at Castle Howard.

It is, of course, quite possible that this portrait of Henry VIII descended in the Howard family from the outset. The Howard family were without question one of the most powerful and important families at court during the reign of Henry VIII, particularly in the person of Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk (1473–1554). Although it is improbable
that a member of the family would have commissioned a likeness of the King in the same year that his Queen Catherine Howard – who was the Duke’s niece – was executed, at this critical juncture in the Howard family’s fortunes the ever wily Norfolk may have done so to re-assert his loyalty to the King. It was also at this date that his son Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517–47) sat to Holbein for his portrait (Museu de Arte, Sao Paolo). Surrey’s portrait and another of his father (Royal Collection) both descended to his great-grandson Thomas Howard, 2nd Earl of Arundel (1585–1646).9 Arundel was an inveterate collector of Holbein’s work, owning no fewer that forty-four works by or attributed to him at the time of his death. Significantly, among the paintings in the inventory of the estate of his widow Alethea, Countess of Arundel, drawn up in 1654 before the dispersal of the collection, there is listed an unattributed painting of the King (‘Henrico octavo’), whose nature and whereabouts remain unknown.10 Such a painting is not recorded in the 1641 inventory of the Countess’ London residence at Tart Hall, nor in the Arundel sales in Amsterdam in 1684 or of the main London residence, Arundel House, in 1720.11 These inventories are, however, unlikely to have been complete – indeed one of the principal omissions are the family portraits – and such a work may easily have been sold or given to other family members. Following the court proceedings over the Countess’ estate, Arundel House passed to her grandson Henry Howard, 6th Duke of Norfolk, while her residence at Tart Hall passed to her second son Sir William Howard, 1st Viscount Stafford. Sales from both houses continued in the following years. A part of the famous collection of Arundel marbles was, for example, sold privately in 1691 from Arundel House to Sir William Fermor. Similarly Van Dyck’s famous portrait of the Earl of Arundel with his grandson (Arundel Castle) remained at Tart Hall until it was removed by the 3rd Earl of Stafford around 1743. It is very possible that the present portrait could have been sold in similar fashion, perhaps to a family member. Ganz notes that a portrait of the King in the possession of the Howard family was recorded by Karel van Mander in his Schilder-Boeck of 1604, but the evidence for this is unclear.12

1 Strong 1968, p. 157.
4 Horenbout had worked for the Crown since 1525 and became ‘King’s painter’ in 1531 at twice Holbein’s salary. He became an English citizen in 1534 and is regarded as the founder of the English school of portrait miniatures, but no documented or securely attributed panel portrait by him survives.
5 For the most detailed list see Strong 1968, p. 159 and Rowlands 1985, p. 236.
7 Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung. Black, red and white chalk on paper, 30.7 x 24.4 cm. Exhibited London 2006–07, no. 130, reproduced.
8 There is no record of such an inscription on this panel, which has since been cradled.
9 The portrait of Surrey then disappeared from view until emerging in the collection of George Herbert and later the Sheffield family, while that of Norfolk was seen by Vertue (Note Books, vol. III, p. 122) in ‘a sale of Pictures’ in London in 1744, where it was bought for Frederick, Prince of Wales.
12 Ganz 1950, p. 255.

Fig. 1

Hans Holbein the Younger, King Henry VIII, oil on oak panel, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Madrid, Spain / Bridgeman Images

Fig. 2

Detail of the present lot

Fig. 3

Hans Holbein the Younger, Henry VIII handing over a charter to Thomas Vicary, commemorating the joining of the Barbers and Surgeons Guilds, 1541, oil on panel, Barber-Surgeons’ Hall, London, UK © Courtesy of the Worshipful Company of Barbers / Bridgeman Images.

Fig. 4

Follower of Hans Holbein the Younger, King Henry VIII, oil on panel, early 17th century (circa 1542) NPG 496 © National Portrait Gallery, London

Fig. 5

Workshop of Hans Holbein the Younger, Henry VIII, © Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München, Inv. 12875 Z
Fig. 6

Detail of present lot