

Face to Face

SUMMER 2008

National
Portrait
Gallery

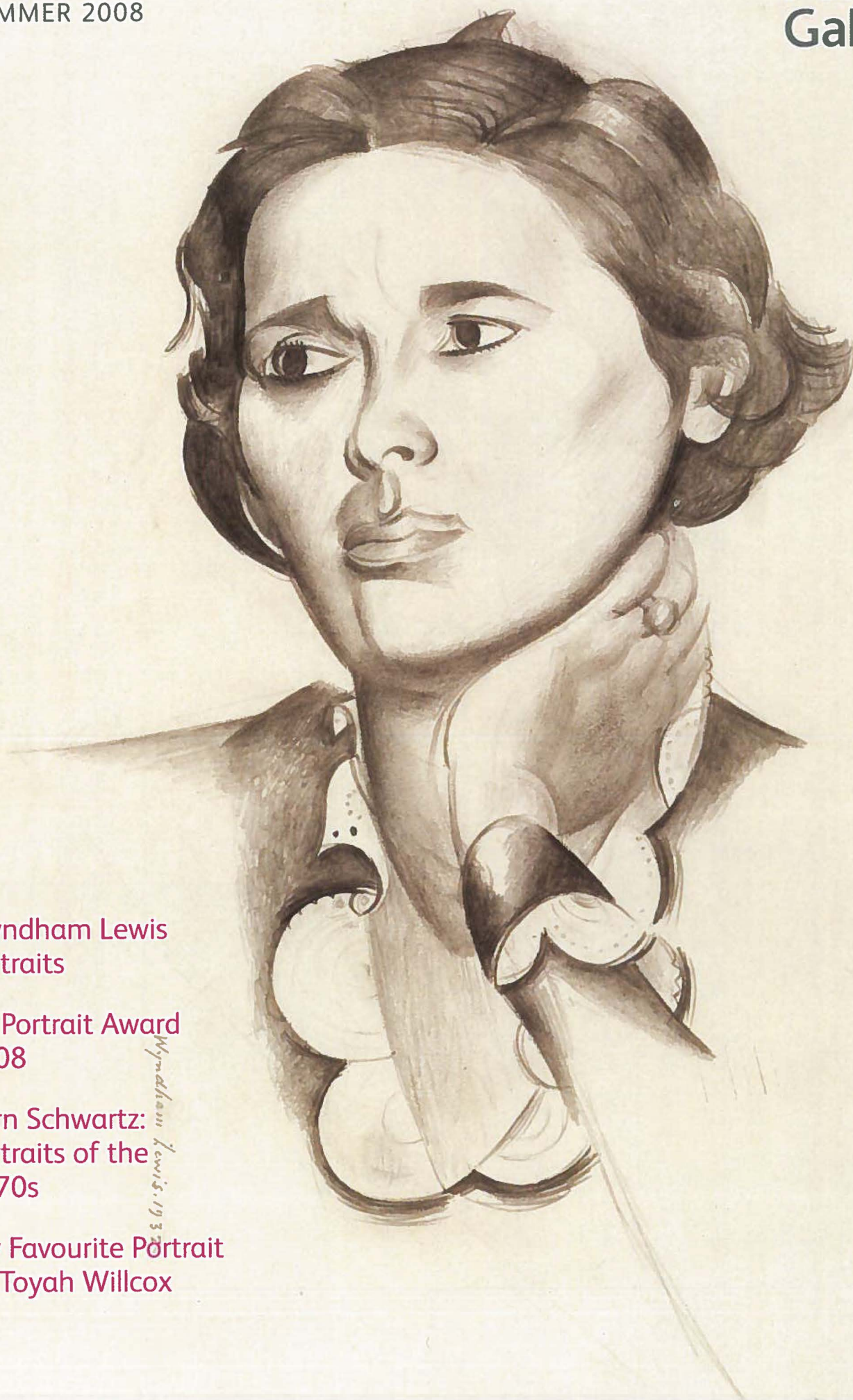
Wyndham Lewis
Portraits

BP Portrait Award
2008

Bern Schwartz:
Portraits of the
1970s

My Favourite Portrait
by Toyah Willcox

Wyndham Lewis, 1932



BERN SCHWARTZ: **PORTRAITS OF THE 1970S**

**10 July 2008 –
4 January 2009**

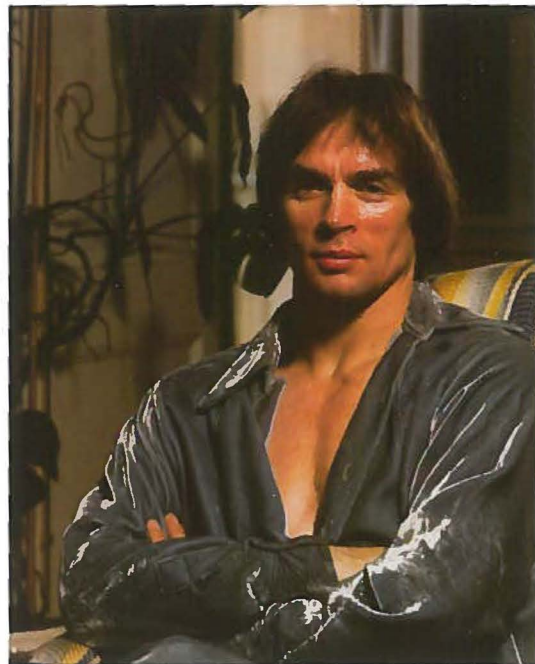
Room 33
Admission free

AS PART OF THE CELEBRATIONS for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, the prestigious Bond Street gallery P. and D. Colnaghi held a fund-raising exhibition showing new portraits of leading members of Britain's cultural and political élite. During an intense four-month period Bern Schwartz, assisted by his wife Ronny, organised more than ninety sittings. The exhibition, entitled *Outstanding Features*, was followed by the impressive publication *Contemporaries: Portraits by Bern Schwartz* (1978). This featured a generous introduction by the art historian Kenneth Clark, who astutely observed that 'Schwartz's photographs portray for us a section of English society of the 1970s as vividly as the photographs of Mrs Cameron portrayed the society of the 1860s', concluding that historians 'will find these photographs an invaluable guide to the intellectual life of life of the time' while enjoying them 'as wholly admirable examples of the art of photography'.

Now thirty years later, thanks to the Bernard Lee Schwartz foundation, 140 dye transfer (colour) prints have been presented to the National Portrait Gallery and form the basis of this exciting and colourful display.

Bern Schwartz, born in New York City, grew up in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and pursued a number of successful business careers before taking up photography whole-heartedly at the age of sixty, like Mrs Cameron, late in life. Cameron's early photographic mentor was the Victorian artist-photographer David Wilkie Wynfield. For Schwartz it was Philippe Halsman, the photographer who contributed over 100 cover portraits to *Life* magazine and commented, 'I taught him all the photographic technique I had learned in almost fifty years.' The vision of newsreader Angela Rippon leaping is Schwartz's most obvious tribute to Halsman's famous 'jump' series, whilst the 'speaking likenesses' he achieved from so many of his subjects pay tribute to his ability to engage his sitters.

The eclectic mix of subjects that Schwartz portrayed captures important historic moments while creating long-term photographic icons. Portraits of Lord Mountbatten, Sir John Gielgud and Sir Harold Wilson seem timeless, while fashion designer Zandra Rhodes, shown surrounded by her keynote fabric designs, is shown at a relatively early stage of her career; ice-skater John Curry was fresh from his medal-winning at the 1976 Winter Olympics, while



ABOVE
Clare Francis, 1 July, 1977
© Bern Schwartz

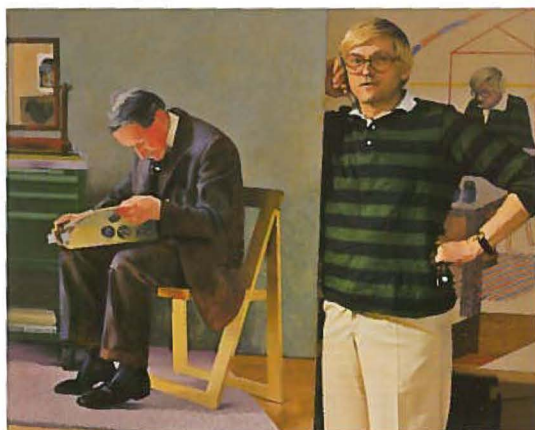
RIGHT FROM TOP
Rudolf Nureyev, 10 July, 1977
Angela Rippon, 29 June, 1977
Both © Bern Schwartz



Clare Francis had recently become the first British woman to sail single-handed across the Atlantic in the 1976 Transatlantic Race. Margaret Thatcher, as leader of the Opposition, was poised for power and utilised Schwartz's portrait for her campaign poster and official photographs.

The arts are well represented by studies of dancers such as Dame Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev, Anthony Dowell and Merle Park; by Henry Moore at his studio in Much Hadham, and by David Hockney, fresh from his success with designs for the opera *The Rake's Progress* at Glyndebourne. Hockney was prevailed on by Schwartz to put on the striped green and blue shirt in which he appeared in an earlier *Self-Portrait*, still in his London studio, and pose with the celebrated double portrait of his parents.

RIGHT
David Hockney, 5 July, 1977
© Bern Schwartz



Terence Pepper
CURATOR OF PHOTOGRAPHS