

# [***King Charles' first official portrait since coronation proves divisive***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C1K-VR41-DY7V-G00G-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** By Christy Choi, CNN

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Buckingham Palace revealed the first official portrait of King Charles III since his coronation on Tuesday, and it's proving to be divisive with its lurid red brushstrokes.

The 8.5 by 6.5-foot painting is by British artist Jonathan Yeo, who has painted high-profile subjects throughout his career including former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, actor Nicole Kidman and education activist Malala Yousafzai.

Yeo, who began the project while Charles was still Prince of Wales, depicts the monarch wearing the uniform of the Welsh Guards, sword in hand, against a fiery red background that appears to almost swallow him whole, as a butterfly looks like it's about to land on his shoulder.

"Much like the butterfly I've painted hovering over his shoulder, this portrait has evolved as the subject's role in our public life has transformed," said Yeo in a statement released by Buckingham Palace.

"I do my best to capture the life experiences etched into any individual sitter's face. In this case, my aim was also to make reference to the traditions of royal portraiture but in a way that reflects a 21st century monarchy and, above all else, to communicate the subject's deep humanity."

Yeo had four sittings with the King, and also worked from drawings and photographs according to the palace.

The work was commissioned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Charles' membership in The Drapers' Company, which funds education initiatives among other philanthropic efforts, and will be exhibited to the public from May 16 to June 14 at the Philip Mould Gallery in London. It will later hang at Drapers' Hall from the end of August alongside other royal portraits.

The King and Queen are reportedly happy with the portrait - Yeo [*told*](https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-68981200) the BBC Camilla said: "Yes you've got him," after seeing the result, while the monarch was "mildly surprised by the strong color, but otherwise he seemed to be smiling approvingly" - and there was no shortage of commentary on social media.

Commenting under a post of the portrait on the royal family's Instagram account, one user wrote: "with the uniform and that color it looks like (the) visual representation of the massacre cause by colonizers," and one said: "I would have loved this if this was any other color than red. He really captured the essence of him in the face, but the harshness of the red doesn't match the softness of his expression." Another post read: "Looks like he's going straight to hell."

Art historian [*Richard Morris*](https://twitter.com/ahistoryinart/status/1790407781477949657) said on X, "I really like the portrait... before photography, to have a great painter capture your real appearance you accepted the revelation of your flaws and your mortality. It's what Yeo captures here."

While the celebrated artist works mainly in oils, he has dabbled in another medium: collage. In 2007, after a commission to paint former US President George W. Bush fell through, he decided to make an "ironic homage," according to his website, by collaging cutouts from hardcore pornographic magazines to create a portrait of the then US president, a satire on "the assumed moral superiority of the extreme right in American ***politics***."

It was the first in a wider series depicting public figures "understood to have traded on their sexual morality," including Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sarah Palin, Silvio Berlusconi and British conservative activist Mary Whitehouse.

As for the portrait of the K ing, Yeo said [*on his website*](https://www.jonathanyeo.com/new-index-41) that the vivid colors of the glazes are "not only resonating with the royal heritage found in many historical portraits but also injecting a dynamic, contemporary jolt into the genre with its uniformly powerful hue - providing a modern contrast to more traditional depictions."

He added the butterfly symbolized beauty and nature while highlighting the king's passion for the environment.

Yeo's paintings are included in the permanent collection of London's National Portrait Gallery.

The King [*is an artist himself*](https://www.cnn.com/style/article/king-charles-balmoral-print-auction-scli-intl/index.html), and a collection of his watercolors went on show in London in 2022. He has previously [*described*](https://www.cnn.com/style/article/prince-charles-paintings-watercolors/index.html) painting as "one of the most relaxing and therapeutic exercises I know," adding that it "refreshes parts of the soul which other activities can't reach."

By Christy Choi, CNN

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