

GAY ICONS

All too often, 'gay icon' is just any old female diva, but a new exhibition celebrating **Gay Icons** opens up at the **National Portrait Gallery**, and it looks at gay men and lesbians - as well as some token straights - who have provided inspiration for us all.

We've chosen some of the people who've been picked by the panel of judges (all iconic in their own right - Elton John, Sir Ian McKellen et al), found out who the boyz on the street idolise and come up with our very own list of the finest gays on the globe.

THEIRS

Gay Icons is the first portrait exhibition to celebrate the contribution of gay people and gay icons to history. The National Portrait Gallery's panel chose 60 photographs all-in-all, and here we present 10 of the best.

JEFF STRYKER



Good to have an out-and-out sex object (and former Boyz cover star) for the icons list. Porn star Jeff Stryker was a big hit in 80s and 90s porn, and

was famed for his golden good looks, penchant for aggression and dirty talk and his 10 inch donger! The dildo which was based on his big'un is the best-selling in history.

DAVID HOCKNEY

Bradford-born Hockney has been at the forefront of exciting art since the 60s and is still pumping out great, novel work at the age of 71. He's given us brilliant portraits of everyone from his mum to Divine and thanks to him, we have those refreshing, modern pool paintings from California. Watch him in A Bigger Splash for an insight into this funny and fascinating character.

JOE DALLESANDRO

Warhol superstar Joe Dallesandro is a pocket rocket of a man who was the number one sex symbol of the American underground. He was a model and prostitute as a teen before Andy got his hands on him and turned him into a film star. Warhol once said, 'In my movies, everyone's in love with Joe Dallesandro.'

EDMUND WHITE

Writer Edmund White has a killer turn of phrase and can talk about everything from the highbrow to the lowbrow with equal finesse. He found early fame in 1982 with his book, A Boy's Own Story, and his memoirs, My Lives, are a rollicking good read, full of sex, psychology and subversion.



HARVEY MILK



QUENTIN CRISP

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The Stately Homo Quentin Crisp shot to fame in the 70s after the publication of his memoirs, The Naked Civil Servant, which revealed his defiant exhibitionism and refusal to remain in the closet. Once it was televised, with John Hurt in the lead role, the two of them became terribly famous. Crisp was eccentric and outlandishly effeminate, sporting lilacs and pinks, and was a great bender of normal identity rules.

GIANNI VERSACE

Versace was the king of beauty and bling, whose fabulous clothes were as popular with Notorious BIG as they were with Princess Diana and Elizabeth Hurley ('that dress'). He was a well-liked designer who was a huge hit with the supermodels of the day - Naomi, Kate, Linda - who all loved to walk in his shows. Tragically, Versace was murdered outside his Miami mansion aged 50, but his label and influence live on.

HARVEY MILK

Most of us didn't have a clue who Harvey Milk was until Sean Penn played him in a blockbuster and bagged an Oscar for his efforts. Well, if you still don't, he was America's first openly gay man to be elected into public office. He fought tirelessly for gay rights in California and across the USA until he was assassinated on 27 November, 1978 by fellow Supervisor, Dan White.

FRANCIS BACON

The Irish painter Bacon's artwork is bold, macabre and homoerotic, often with violent or nightmarish imagery. It went against the assumption that gay men would just make pretty, pleasant art. This was dark and deathly stuff. After the 1971 suicide of his lover, George Dyer, his art became more personal, inward looking and pre-occupied with death, but he was still an out-going character and could regularly be seen drinking and eating in Soho.

KENNETH WILLIAMS

Carry On comedian Kenneth Williams was the ultimate in camp and was a fairly outrageous presence on the box in the 60s and 70s. He wasn't always a barrel of laughs though, as his diaries reveal him to be quite a depressive character and someone who couldn't fully accept his own sexuality. Despite this, he brought joy to his audiences and was an identifiable queer in the mainstream.

JOE ORTON

In his short career, playwright Joe Orton made a huge impact with his dark comedies, which were everything from the brooding and threateningly sexual Entertaining Mr Sloane, to the daft, almost Carry On, Erpingham Camp. John Lahr's The Orton Diaries are a great insight into the cheeky, charming, bitchy and super bright man. Orton had a tempestuous relationship with fellow writer Kenneth Halliwell, who was bitter that his boyfriend had eclipsed him, and eventually bludgeoned him to death with nine hammer blows to the head on 9 August 1967.



JOE ORTON

Quentin Crisp (NPG X126805) by Fergus Greer 1989. National Portrait Gallery. London © Fergus Greer • Harvey Milk by Eiren Convento Ramirez 1978 © Eiren Ramirez, 1978/2008 • Joe Orton (NPG P512 (16)) by Lewis Morley 1965, National Portrait Gallery. London © Lewis Morley Archive / National Portrait Gallery. London

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