ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST

Podcast transcript

SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE AND THE WATERLOO CHAMBER

Hello. And welcome to a podcast from Royal Collection Trust where we'll hear about the dazzling portraits painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence. Desmond Shawe-Taylor, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, gives a lecture at Windsor Castle about the magnificent Waterloo Chamber, which is dominated by Lawrence's work. Hear the fascinating story of Lawrence's travels across Europe to paint the celebrated figures from church and state who brought about the overthrow of Napoleon and championed diplomacy as the way to resolve future conflicts. The portraits capture a turning point in European history, but was this the new era of peace and co-operation they promised? Other talks, lectures and study days in our events programme can be found in the What's On guide on our website.

I'm going to be talking about, I suppose the, well definitely the Waterloo Chamber, and you might wonder why are we not there and it's partly because I'm going to be looking at quite a lot of other material, much of it displayed in the Waterloo trail around Windsor Castle, so we couldn't have absolutely just stood in the Waterloo Chamber, we would have needed to wander round. So you're stuck with the standard lecture format, I'm afraid, but it means that you have to come back to see the Waterloo Chamber again, so it's part of our marketing policy. And what I would like to do really is to introduce three characters, all of whom are in rough outline of the same generation. The first is Napoleon, here we are, born in 1769, and I think it's not just that they're all contemporaries, I'm to some extent talking about the age that they lived in, which was, I think, not really disputed, one of the most remarkable in European history, and really I think to get a sense of what that age was you need to remember that line of Wordsworth, 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, to be young a very heaven', referring to the French Revolution. Napoleon was 20 at the time of the French Revolution in '89. On the left-hand side we see Napoleon in a painting by Jacques-Louis David crossing the Alps as a successor, a heroic successor to Hannibal in this spectacular neo-classical equestrian image, and on the right, similarly neo-classical in this very frontal, and I

suppose iconic would be a word, image as Emperor, looking really like a Jupiter, a figure of Jupiter facing straight out towards us. So he's our first character, our first hero.

And the next character in the story is a few years older, seven years older, but still essentially the same generation, namely George IV, seen top left as the Prince of Wales, and he's not riding across the Alps, he's riding across Hyde Park. And he's very much a man of fashion, he's not the greatest hero in the world, but he too, I think if you look at that date, 1791, you might think to yourself, oh well, the French Revolution's just happened, he will abominate and execrate this appalling event taking place in France at this date, and the answer is absolutely not. At this date, 1781, before the Terror, before the guillotine of the King, the French Revolution was widely welcomed in Britain. This is what the British had been telling the French to do for a hundred years and finally they'd got around to doing it, you know, getting rid of that terrible absolutism and having a proper constitutional monarchy. And he's wearing the Foxite uniform of buff coloured breeches and a blue coat, but this is part of a sort of smart, young, radical man about town. And actually, the fact that he is riding across Hyde Park, a public park, dressed in a way which is not singling him out as royalty, and here, on the other hand, is him in his coronation portrait, differing from the Ingres image, much more glamorous and elegant and without that sort of neo-classical elemental effect.

And the final character, again exactly the same age as Napoleon, so we're back on the same generation. He's somebody who was brought up in very humble circumstances, namely the artist, Sir Thomas Lawrence. There he is on the left; very, very handsome, very talented, and his father ran the Black Bear Inn at Devizes, now called the Bear Inn, which was on the road to Bath, so fashionable people called, stayed the night, people like David Garrick. And the innkeeper produced his precocious son to entertain the guests, which must have annoyed them like mad, but they would be required to listen to little Thomas Lawrence doing a reading from Shakespeare or doing a little portrait sketch. But I think the interesting thing is, from that really very humble origins, Lawrence's talent was recognised and in this great age of opportunity he enjoyed very early success, he'd gained this commission just at the time of the French Revolution to paint Queen Charlotte, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy, so he had a very, very prestigious and important commission. There's Queen Charlotte with Eton College Chapel in the background, and on the left-hand side a portrait of George III. This is an example in the Royal Collection and it's a version, an autographed version of a

design which was originally commissioned in 1792, so a very, very promising early start to his career. However, his relation with the Prince Regent, with George IV, did not particularly begin well because he painted this portrait of George IV's Queen, obviously while he was Prince of Wales, Princess Caroline with their daughter, Princess Charlotte, at Blackheath and was cited in an event called 'the delicate investigation', which was an investigation which was anything but delicate, into Queen Caroline's behaviour, and he was suspected of having committed adultery with her. So, probably unfairly, I think he'd stayed the night at Blackheath while painting the portrait. But it clearly didn't put him in George IV's good books.

So though by far the most talented portrait painter, he was kind of left outside royal favour until 1814. And the event that really brought all these events together that kind of made this, made the Waterloo Chamber, as it were, began actually before the battle itself when the allies defeated Napoleon in 1814 and to celebrate that victory they gathered in London for something which is sometimes called the Congress of London, though there wasn't really any congressing that happened, it was just a kind of celebration in London in 1814, and here is a medal proudly announcing that England gives peace to the world, 1814. So this is part of the celebration of London 1814 with the Prince Regent on the left-hand side. And here, another example of a medal, Neptune greeting Prussia and Russian delegates to London in 1814, because one of the points about this congress was that the Czar and the King of Prussia were both in London to celebrate at the same time. So it was an early example of a kind of summit meeting. And there was one other advantage also to the celebrations – here's an example in the park of a huge firework display, this is the Temple of Concord which will all go up in smoke, you can see it's in St James's Park with Westminster Abbey in the background – another advantage of this date, 1814, was that it was the centenary of the arrival of the Hanoverians in 1714. So after lots and lots of bad news, clearly with the madness of the reigning King, George III, finally there was an example of good news: Napoleon had been defeated, everybody was gathering in London as the place that was recognised to be *the* one power that had constantly opposed Napoleon and finally, the Hanoverian dynasty had come good, as it were, I think that was the idea. And at that moment, just to sort of give a bit of background, if we are now thinking all these people are coming to London in 1814, where is the palace, where are they going to go to have these celebrations, well, the main palaces: St James's Palace; the Queen's house, current Buckingham Palace; Windsor Castle, were honestly slightly mothballed because they still belonged to the King but the King was mad, I

mean he was locked up in a room here in Windsor. So they really didn't have the same prestige as the place where the Prince Regent lived, namely Carlton House.

So we have to regard Carlton House as, for this moment, as the kind of royal palace in London. And here is its façade on Pall Mall. This is really, today you'd have the Athenaeum here on the right-hand side and the Institute of Directors on the other side – it's entirely demolished but you can see exactly where it would have been and Carlton House Terrace would be off on the left, that's where it sat – and this, its cour d'honneur and principal façade, you can see is very grand and palatial. Its garden façade, interestingly, is totally different, but I'm not going to talk about that, but it's quite interesting for the way in which paintings are displayed, because across this front façade you have very grand and heroic painting displayed, and across the back façade much more elegant landscape painting, Dutch genre painting and so on. But I wanted to, just this room behind here, the Crimson Drawing Room immediately behind here, where we see this space hung with Rubens' landscapes and paintings attributed to Reynolds and very, very splendid decoration. Immediately behind us, where we are looking in this watercolour, so not visible, but behind us, there were two full-length heroic military portraits by Reynolds which were valued in George IV's inventory at 1,000 guineas each, which is an astonishing sum of money at that date. So they were paintings of great prestige. And what's interesting about it, I think, is we're bringing together the Congress of London, all these people are assembled and George IV is, in his principal palace he hangs these spectacular Reynolds' portraits which celebrate a grand alliance of the previous generation between a German General and a British General who fought shoulder to shoulder against the French in the Seven Years' War. So there's Friedrich Wilhelm Ernst Graf von Schaumburg-Lippe on the left-hand side and the Marquess of Granby on the right-hand side. And I think this pair of paintings, where they hung, how much they were valued, the prestige that Reynolds enjoyed, you know, 20 years or so after his death, all these things are absolutely critical to the genesis of the Waterloo Chamber, because I think George IV just looked at this and said I have now an opportunity similarly to create a celebration of this international brotherhood in arms where the Germans and the British and the Russians stand shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy, the French. And I haven't got Reynolds anymore, because he's dead, but I've tried Hoppner, I've told him to paint exactly like Reynolds, but he's not really quite up to snuff, but this new Lawrence, I'll get him to do that, I'll get him to paint like that. And almost everything about the paintings, the over – I mean

this is an extra-large format – the kind of imagery employed, is copied by Lawrence in the Waterloo Chamber. I mean just, before we move on, I'll just point out one thing that's constantly repeated; it's a Reynolds' idea that in the smoke of battle a warrior has a kind of private storm cloud all to themselves, rather like in cartoons when you're cross, you have a little cloud above your head. And Reynolds does this again and again and again, and it conveys the idea rather like the Homeric epithet of Jupiter, Jupiter cloud bearer. You come, if you're a warrior, you bring a storm with you and you know, you rain it on the enemy.

And also, very strong is the classical reference. As you can see this, the figure of the Marquess of Granby, he was famous for having charged in the Battle of Warburg so precipitately that he lost both his hat and his wig. So it's very important in battle to have a hat and a wig on, but he lost both in the charge. So that was sort of an affectionate thing which was known about him. But Reynolds uses that opportunity to show him bald where he looks exactly like a classical Roman warrior, particularly as Scipio Africanus was bald and looked sort of exactly like that. So he's deliberately employing this kind of classical reference. So all these kind of Reynolds ideas are here and inspiring and this comes together in the commission which Lawrence received in 1814 through the agency of a friend, the Marquess of Londonderry, where it was, I think the Prince sort of swallowed his pride and said Lawrence, you're the man that can do this. We have the opportunity of these people in London, paint pairs like this one and we can again create another, we can create a sort of heroes' gallery.

And so this is the first batch of portraits, before the Battle of Waterloo. The celebration in the background here is a thanksgiving service at St Paul's Cathedral for the defeat of Napoleon, and it shows the Duke of Wellington holding the Sword of State as a defender of the state, completely unprecedented image of a warrior grasping an emblem of regal or of state power, you know, warriors normally don't do that, but he is shown almost as an accompaniment to the throne. I think the idea is that that is the Regent's throne and this is the defender of that throne. But most of all, he's also a defender of the Church, in the background you can see St Paul's is shown, almost as if it's on fire like that famous image during the Blitz, and the Duke of Wellington certainly has his own private storm cloud, it's a really impressive one and he is shown kind of breasting the storm, looking at the light, looking at the hope for the future.

And a very similar image on the right-hand side of his opposite number, his co-victor subsequently, remember not at this stage, Field Marshal Blücher, shown similarly with his private storm cloud with this commanding gesture, the light striking his face. And this pair of portraits were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1815. So they're the first fruits of this long process, creating the Waterloo Chamber. Also, begun in 1814 were portraits of Friedrich Wilhelm III, King of Prussia, on the left-hand side, shown as a warrior in battle, so a crowned head but shown in a military guise with the storm of battle in the background, in a Field Marshal's uniform. And also a portrait of the Czar, similarly in a field of battle, was begun in 1814. And finally, in the Royal Academy exhibition of 1815, a portrait of Metternich, the diplomat, was exhibited, but we don't know what it looked like, we don't know. It might have been early stage in this painting, which was subsequently reworked, or it might have been a separate composition altogether. The former is much the most likely. But the important thing is that at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1815 the three crucial elements of the types of sitters that you see in the Waterloo Chamber were already there. So the idea is there right from the start, namely the heroes in these over, specially big full-length formats, you know full-lengths came in standard sizes from way back, really from Lely onwards, a full-length had a standard size. These are extra-large full-lengths of heroes, crowned heads participating in the defeat of Napoleon and diplomats involved in the congresses, so far the Congress only of London.

So that's a sort of crucial element. The next episode in the story was a congress which was a much more seriously congressional kind of congress, namely the Congress of Vienna, which you can see, from September 1814 to June 1815, which was interrupted by the escape of Napoleon from Elba and the 100 Days. So this conference was basically arranging the peace, sorting out the peace and was interrupted by Napoleon. And I think this image, which is in the exhibition in the drawings galleries, which are just through there, by Isabey, is absolutely critical because it shows the new world order which the Napoleonic Wars created, where the business of Europe was settled by diplomats at these congresses. And you can see even the way the image is constructed, it suggests that the business of Europe is somehow organised through a very civilised kind of conversation. If you look at this you can't really tell who's giving orders to whom, who's the victor, who's the defeated. Does Talleyrand as a Frenchman look particularly any more defeated than - this is Castlereagh – you know, a victor. It suggests a much more kind of elegant ballroom or drawing room kind of way of

organising Europe. Just, by the way, who are these people? There's Talleyrand there and there's Metternich – we'll come back to him – and also very, very important for lovers of Beethoven, there's Count Razumovsky up at the back. So you have – let's just check I've got the right guy, yeah – you have him to thank for some very interesting middle period quartets, the Razumovsky Quartets.

But I think the, if we're looking at a sort of wider political or cultural significance of the Congress of Vienna, it represents a, to most people in Europe, an appalling moment of reaction. Because all the hope which had been instilled by the French Revolution was demolished. By the time of the Battle of Waterloo everybody was reasonably fed up with Napoleon, so I don't think anybody, bar a few hardliners, was disappointed by his fall, but almost everybody became very, very rapidly disappointed by the restoration of the very worst aspects of the Ancien Régime which followed and for which the Congress of Vienna is chiefly responsible. In particular, places like Italy who had obviously seen Napoleon as a liberator, were simply returned to their Austrian masters as if nothing had happened. And that really occurred throughout Europe and I think one of the things that is probably the most important thing, I think, to remember in the year of Waterloo, celebrations of Waterloo, is that if we look at the story, for example, of romanticism, of culture in Europe during this age, we see very clearly three stages in the history of romanticism. The years before the Terror, from let's say the 1770s, the 1780s, were years of unparalleled optimism. It's almost impossible to find a period in European history where people were more optimistic than immediately after the American Revolution, which was welcomed almost everywhere, including in Britain, abruptly ended by the Terror and by the actual struggle of the Napoleonic Wars. The period of struggle is completely different from the period of disillusionment which followed the victory at Waterloo and the sort of world that these guys put together. And if you look at anything, any book written in the ten or 20, 30 years after this, you will find that it is coloured by this bitter alienation and disillusionment with the world, that the hero almost invariably finds themselves at odds with the world around them in the writing of people like Byron, Shelley, Pushkin, Stendhal, and if I were better educated I could list plenty of others. And it would be really fundamentally the same with people like Beethoven who would have found themselves completely out of touch with the world that these people had restored, having been no doubt sort of disillusioned by Napoleon, you know, Beethoven famously tore the dedication of the Third Symphony, tore the title page out when Napoleon crowned himself

Emperor, but I don't think he, well, absolutely sure that he wasn't entirely at home with the kind of world that was created after the Congress of Vienna. So I think I'd like to sort of colour everything by just a sort of awareness of this attempt to restore every aspect of the Ancien Régime.

Anyway, the next thing that actually happens is the Battle of Waterloo. So this is a depiction by George Jones, commissioned by George IV, showing the actual battle itself. And after that there is an opportunity then to return to this grand scheme of celebrating the defeat of Napoleon, now that it is finally once and for all achieved. And while that is happening, it kicks off again really with the Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818, but one other event takes place which is that George III died in 1820 and George IV, instead of being Regent, was crowned King and here we see his banquet of coronation in Westminster Hall with this wonderful old antiquated ceremony of the King's champion riding in and challenging anybody that disputes the right of the King. So the sort of great medieval fest done with incomparable splendour and pageantry by George IV, who loved this kind of thing. And this is the moment that Madame Tussauds was setting up in London, so the whole idea of… there's no spectacle which is too Cecil B DeMille for George IV or Madame Tussauds, or for the London public. But I think the thing to look at here is this idea of the medieval grand hall where heroes of antiquity meet and toast their liege lord, you know, this kind of image of the Knights of the Round Table, Arthur and so on.

And if you look at the architecture in this ensemble, I think it explains the next watercolour here, which came from John Nash's office, by somebody called Frederick Mackenzie, there's a document paying for this drawing, which shows *a* design for *a* Waterloo Chamber somewhere, possibly attached to Carlton House, but much more likely to be here at Windsor. So this is the first idea, what did George IV have in mind. And I think you can see, it kind of follows very, very logically. There you are, there's Westminster Hall, a nice old medieval hall, grand hall, here's his Waterloo Chamber where the portraits of crowned heads surround, so it's a great gathering of allied monarchs with, in between, their diplomats. So you have big, small, big, small, big small, monarch, diplomat, monarch, diplomat. It's more difficult in this image, I mean it's difficult to recognise who all these people are, I don't think they're accurately depicted. When, by the time that George IV was completely revamping Windsor Castle, now he'd become King he could finally get his hands on Windsor Castle –

previously it was obviously out of bounds – and he embarked upon the complete revamping of the castle by Jeffrey, designs by Jeffry Wyatville, creating this medieval fairy tale castle that we now recognise. And part of – there's him up the Grand Staircase – part of those designs were these drawings, one of which is dated. You can hardly see the drawing but you can just see that it's a plan, basically, for a vault with sloping sides, which was, they're absolutely clearly dated, so they date from the 1830s, by Wyatville, and they are plans to roof in Horn Court, which is basically just in there, and to create the Waterloo Chamber out of what was previously just an external space. So to create another Grand Hall at Windsor Castle. So that's one design, that's another design and you can see that they are very, very close to the design that was finally built, though it was built after George IV's death, so you can see that arrangement of fenestration is exactly that which you see up in the Waterloo Chamber. So essentially, the design of the Waterloo Chamber, the idea, the location, the blocking in this courtyard, all this was conceived as part of Wyatville's revamping of Windsor Castle for George IV, though completed after George IV's death.

And this is the first view of what it looked like and it's probably the most reliable view showing what George IV and what Sir Thomas Lawrence had envisaged, though there's no way of proving that. But you can see the same arrangement that we saw in that early sketch, of large, small, large, small with monarchs, diplomats, monarchs, Emperor, monarch, diplomat, monarch, diplomat, diplomat, diplomat – you see there's a very clear hierarchy: the three-quarter lengths are diplomats, the full-lengths are monarchs. And above the balconies in the sort of heroes' galleries, as it were, you have the warriors. So you have these very clear spaces: warriors at the end, at either end and monarchs and diplomats. And you also have a clear division: European, Continental monarchs on this side; British members of the royal family on this side, so George III and the Emperor face each other. Just as the Duke of Wellington and Schwarzenberg, the supreme commander, face each other at either balcony end. And I think it's no accident that it's impossible to tell which is the alignment of the room, so there's no kind of high altar. So that that means it's impossible to say, which is more important, the Duke of Wellington or Schwarzenberg, or George III and the Emperor, because if you knew which way they were lined up you'd know that was the altar and this is the entrance end, but you don't know which way they're lined up, so either could be. Because, as a matter of fact, the Emperor is more important than George III, because George III as Elector of Hanover was a subordinate of the Emperor and the Duke of Wellington was a

subordinate of Schwarzenberg who was a supreme commander, so let's not stress, that because it's, you know, it doesn't go our way, if it did go our way, obviously we would stress it, if you see what I mean. But otherwise this arrangement in 1844 essentially shows the room as it is today, just one or two things which, almost for interest's sake, that have changed. Some really horrible, nasty strap work has been put on the walls up here, which was added in the early 20th century, it was a much simpler surface at this date. There are also the words of the orders, like *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense*, and so on, *Ich Dien*, are written round here. These were not part of the original design, but otherwise the room is pretty much exactly as it is today.

I'm now just going to talk a little bit more about Lawrence's painting style, firstly to revert the heroic type of imagery, I think you can see again, picking up where I left off, the legacy of Reynolds. Hoppner, on the right-hand side, painting Nelson very soon after Reynolds's death, absolutely obviously in the Reynolds style, with the private storm cloud, the low viewpoint, the dramatic towering figure. Sir Thomas Lawrence paints Karl Erzherzog von Österreich, Charles Archduke of Austria, in exactly the same way. And I think even possibly drawing a kind of parallel between these two short, very slight men with rather similar physiognomy, both hugely successful commanders. Charles, Archduke of Austria was the most successful commander against Napoleon before the Duke of Wellington. And another example, again really repeating, here we see this sort of heroic resolve, here's Schwarzenberg with the private storm cloud and the classical reference. This arm extended is a very clear echo of the statue of the Apollo Belvedere, which was regarded as the kind of archetypal image of a heroic mythological figure and often used by Reynolds for warriors. And the way in which this piece of drapery's hung over his arm looks like a toga or some kind of classical emblem. Another device copied from Reynolds is this idea of the horse being restrained by a heroic rider and his assistant. And this image, I think, is used in the romantic period as an image of the energy or power or heroism, courage, whatever you like, of the sitter, which is being emblematically represented in the horse. So it's as if he's looking all cool and calm and collected, but inside he's a great surging, rearing sort of a man that just wants to get at Johnny Foreigner and, you know, and attack them. And that's a very different image, I think, from the image of the rider riding a horse, restraining a horse, because one is an image, I think, of man controlling nature; you sit on a horse and you restrain it because you are in command. That's much more characteristic of the 18th century and of classical antiquity, this image, it's as if the

power of nature is not that easily restrained and it is as if the character of the hero is not just to restrain that power, but to exhibit it. I think you can see in both cases this image is being employed. And funnily enough, this idea is picked up also in French art, you see it in Géricault as well.

I mentioned earlier actually, the sort of echo of classical antiquity, this is a print of Scipio Africanus and you can see how Reynolds has deliberately made his hero look like this hero of classical antiquity. And this is an example of another echo of classical statuary; the Roman antique Augustus in the Vatican and Blücher with this, instead of having a Roman chest plate, he's got a chest full of medals looking very, very similar with this commanding gesture of the hand extended, in the case of Augustus probably it's a rhetorical gesture, he's addressing an audience. In the case of Blücher it's a military commanding gesture; he's saying to somebody, you know, you get over there, you get stuck in. And the fragments of classical antiquity, treasures of the Vatican were hugely topical at this point because the French had looted them all and exhibited them at the Louvre, and George IV, through the agency of the sculptor, Antonio Canova, supported their return to the Vatican. So it was sort of cause célèbre, a kind of Elgin Marble moment, when these statues, including this one, were taken back to Rome to their proper home, so you can see how topical this sort of reference might have been.

I think probably the most important thing that Lawrence brought to the table and which is very, very different from Reynolds and was widely remarked upon, is the animation and liveliness with which he painted the details, in particular the face. So a number of writers, including Delacroix and the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon, said the great thing about Lawrence is that he gives you the sharpness, the precision of the face, unlike Reynolds who tends to generalise, to produce a rather bland kind of image of the face. And I think you can see this very, very strikingly in this detail of Blücher, and it's particularly important because what makes the Waterloo Chamber special and what makes the opportunity of the Congress of London, the Congress of Vienna, of Aix-la-Chapelle, all these places, what makes it special is that it gives an opportunity of an artist to have a live sitting with a hero, a foreign monarch, a German, a Russian, an Italian, a, you know, a Frenchman, and so on. This opportunity did not normally arise at this date. Generally speaking, they didn't paint a special portrait, they just made a copy of a portrait they already had. So what your previous galleries of allied

monarchs tended to display was very stiff, formal images of clothing, basically, of status. What Lawrence had the opportunity to do was to say I'm not just painting this person's clothing, I actually sat and spoke to Blücher, I spoke to the Russian Emperor, I spoke to the King of Prussia. And he wants to make sure that when you look at that picture you know that, you can see that he was actually there talking to him. So that's what I think makes this animation so particularly important, the kind of asymmetry of this face, the light in the eyes, the way in which the face is obviously moving. And in all the accounts of the way in which these works were painted, this quality of animation is always mentioned. So for example, Blücher sat, only had a very few sittings for Lawrence when he was in London, and generally he sat after lunch and he usually had a huge lunch – he was quite an old man, he was 70 – had a huge lunch, plenty of wine, and he would just, you know, sit, nice warm studio, and nod off while Lawrence had to paint him. So Lawrence had huge difficulties in trying to make him not just look like a very old man nodding off after a very large lunch. And it was said that the only way he could induce an expression of animation was to talk about the Duke of Wellington and Blücher had so much admiration for the Duke of Wellington that he would suddenly light up and say, oh yes, you know, the Duke… Then he would catch him at that moment. So that's the result of that conversation. Blücher probably looked like that for about five seconds and he got it. And similarly, you can see the Emperor, Franz I of Austria, that's what he looked like in official portraiture, not a lively bundle of fun. In the case of Lawrence, you can see that he's much more animated, lively, he's got this impression of a conversation taking place, and that's his unique selling point and it's the unique opportunity of the commission. Again, a detail. And hugely important, I think, in the imagery of this period is the idea of benevolence, they keep referring to the idea of 'the natural benevolence of the Emperor came out', which obviously if you're attempting to restore the rule, the absolute rule of the Ancien Régime, it's quite a good idea to suggest that your absolute ruler is benevolent, you know, it's going to make it go down rather better.

But I think one portrait where this quality has always been singled out more than any other, to the extent that it was a subject of an essay by Delacroix, which is a very rare thing for a great French artist to write an essay in praise of a British artist, but he did in relation to this portrait, which was exhibited at the French Salon. And basically he writes about this sort of mesmerising brilliance of painting. He says sometimes the drawing's a bit shaky, you know, sometimes the contrasts are a bit extreme, sometimes it's a bit living near the edge, but it has

a sort of magic which captures you and draws you into its circle, this brilliance, this animation. Which I think is the characteristic which everybody admired about Lawrence. And you can see here again, the asymmetry of the face, every feature is almost treated in a completely different way, you know, the left eye's completely different from the right eye and the result produces this sort of very, very lively, wily expression.

Lawrence made a trip to Rome in order to paint this portrait and was widely feted in Rome and referred to as 'Il Tiziano Inglese', the English Titian. And I think that's one of the other aspects of Lawrence's commission, is that he was much… he inherited from Reynolds a sense of the canon of great art – this is one of the things that Reynolds brought to portrait painting – the idea that you could refer in your portrait to a great artist of the past and that your learned audience might recognise that reference. But for Reynolds, the references to the art of the past were generally references which concerned the design, or the arrangement or the posture. Reynolds didn't, I mean learnt a little bit, but not really so much about the handling or the way of handling paint. Lawrence, on the other hand, when he looked at the old masters, he looked at the way they actually painted the real detail of how they enjoyed paint, how they put it on, what they did with it. So his references are in that sense much more profound. And I think you can see it in this portrait of Pius VII, that the most obvious reference is to Titian, the great, I mean he was called the Tiziano Inglese, the great painterly artist of the Venetian Renaissance. And not just Titian, in the sort of breadth and freedom and spirit with which the work is painted, but also Titian in that kind of capturing of the kind of wily, savvy sort of image of the sitter. In particular, there's a famous Titian of Paul III with his grandsons, here, his Farnese relatives, where you can see this – this is in the Capodimonte in Naples – where you can see almost deliberately in the image the idea of charming, perhaps slightly oily members of the family and a kind of suspicious looking savvy Pope who's not going to be taken in. And I think that sort of drama is what's being conveyed in this image, the idea that a conversation is taking place, the Pope is looking off because somebody's said something left. All of course represented in a much more benevolent way by Lawrence, it's hugely important of course.

But, I think probably in this case the most important source from the point of view of handling was an artist who at this date was just being rediscovered throughout Europe as one of the great painters of the 17th century, namely Velázquez. And one place where you could

always see a great Velázquez, because remember, people didn't know the collections in Spain very well until the Peninsular War and then in very strange circumstances, but they all knew the Roman collections very well and the one place where you could always see a good Velázquez was in the Doria Pamphilj collection in Rome, where here the Pope, Innocent X. So there's a very clear reference to Velázquez in Lawrence's image. While we're on Velázquez, you can see, I think, in some of the other images the influence of Velázquez and it's much more difficult to know which Velázquez Lawrence was looking at, and I think this is one of the sort of big mysteries of late 18th and early 19th century English painting, which Velázquezs did they know. And I'm showing an example of a painting that they probably didn't know, it's in the Prado, it was in Spain, I doubt if it would have been that familiar, but it's just the best example and I think what I would have said is, imagine something which wasn't quite as good as that, but was pretty inspiring nonetheless. This is an actor called Pablo de Valladolid by Velázquez in the Prado and it shows this extraordinary idea that you can make a figure almost entirely out of a black silhouette, hardly any modelling at all, but you make a background out of this very subtly modelled buff sort of cloudy effect, which looks a bit like a floor, but looks a bit like a wall, but there's no join between the floor and the wall so it just looks a little bit like a scrubbed in background you can't really work out. But what it does is it just makes this figure which should look flat, it's just a black silhouette, makes it incredibly dramatic and full as a volume and dramatic as a silhouette. And it's appropriate for an actor, it's got this incredible éclat. Velázquez spent his entire life just trying to paint that. I mean he painted it loads of different ways, but basically that was what he was trying to do, and I think there's something very, very similar in this image of Count Platov. This was one of the first ones which was executed, it was begun in 1814 and depicts the only Russian serving soldier who was the head of the Cossacks. Here he is with Paris in the background. And I think you can see this sort of grey, buff cloud which is a war cloud, which sort of becomes a horse, it becomes a landscape, it's very like the simple background in the Velázquez, and then you have this incredible black, dramatic silhouette of the figure of Count Platov.

And I think one of the things that is interesting about an artist like Lawrence is that I think there are several artists that sit in that tradition that goes from Velázquez to Manet and they often get forgotten because they aren't left wing enough, if you know what I mean. And Lawrence in who he painted was a toady. In the way he painted he was a genius, so that I think he gets sort of slightly written out of the script because people just want their radical

Manet at one end and their Velázquez at the other and they don't want Lawrences getting in the way in the middle, which I think is a bit unfair on Lawrence. Another example here where the King of Prussia similarly is treated as this black silhouette against a buff background. And I just include this as his opposite number, the Emperor. Another story, which gives you an idea, I think, of the sort of drama of a sitting. If you paint somebody like this you're going to have hundreds of hangers-on hovering around at the time, so it's quite a public event, you've got to know how to manage the room, keep chatting, not get put off, not get cross. And while Lawrence was painting Alexander the Czar, who was young and handsome, so he's much more elegant than most of the crowned heads and rather fancied himself as a dancer and so on – he obviously comes in Tolstoy. He decided that he wanted to change the position of the legs, so there are, underneath here there are four legs and throughout the change all the courtiers said, no, no, you're spoiling it, don't do that, don't do that, don't do that. So he had to struggle with all these people making suggestions until he'd finally, as he wrote it, 'the ship was righted'. He finally got the right legs and covered over the wrong legs and they all said, oh okay, alright, that's fine again. But imagine that kind of slightly public event.

On handling, I think, this is something that I think one sees more and more of. In the early 19th century collectors were more and more interested in the condition of paintings and less interested in, you know, grand ideas of classical references and so on and George IV was the collector supreme of very, very good works in great condition with great technique. So he, for example, took this self-portrait by Rubens and hung it at Carlton House. A very rare example of a painting which was already in the Royal Collection which he hung at Carlton House. And I think if you look at many of the portraits by Lawrence in the Waterloo Chamber, but in particular this of the Earl of Bathurst, you see a kind of fluidity and a brilliance in the painting of the face which owes to Rubens. And Lawrence said that unlike, that he was much more inspired by Rubens as a portrait painter than by Van Dyck. And I think if you look in the detail of these faces you see that reference. And other thing that was noted a lot at the time in the early 19th century was how Rubens was the artist that taught you how to colour, particularly because he used these very, very bright colours, particularly in the shadows, and there was this idea that there are two types of painting and one writer at this date even says that the two camps are 'the bianchi and the neri', the whites and the

blacks.   And Rubens is the leader of the bianchi, the whites, the person that teaches you how to model in light and colour, rather than modelling by shadow.

So we're looking now at this sort of inspiration of old masters, but looking at the real, really getting up close and looking at the detail, and a final example is the inspiration of Rembrandt, another artist that George IV hugely admired and bought these spectacular examples, like the Shipbuilder and his Wife. He also bought this painting here, which we are, as you can probably see from this painting, conserving. I say we, as if I'm doing it, I'm obviously not doing it, my colleague, Rosanna de Sancha is conserving it, so she's got that – well, she's got a bit further – but she got that far by the time we took this picture, cleaning off all this gunk. This is now attributed to Ferdinand Bol, but when it was in George IV's collection it was attributed to Rembrandt and was valued very, very highly, it was regarded as a very, very important Rembrandt. And if you look at the face here, it's got a very characteristic aspect of Rembrandt's art. I mean it does depict Rembrandt, it's not by him, but the face looks absolutely directly out towards you, which is quite rare in portraiture of that period, and the eye sockets are made out of almost perfect circles. So the face is structured in this almost geometric fashion and then it's very, very richly painted, so you lose the underlying geometry, but it's basically very, very clearly articulated, these circles. And I think this painting of somebody called Count Capo d'Istria is directly inspired by that example. You see how the eye sockets are almost perfect circles and how you have this very rich, heavy shadow, very textured, rough hands, textured fur. All these kind of trademark Rembrandt characteristics, and a sort of, I suppose a bluff kind of manly, direct stare which you associate with Rembrandt. It's not the smooth Rubens look or the flamboyant Velázquez look, it's the kind of chunky Rembrandt look. So it's as if Lawrence can kind of vary the artist he's inspired by in order to characterise the different sitters.   So you see this very, very strong depiction.

We now kind of come back to, I'll just finish on the sort of politics of the Waterloo Chamber. Because… this is one of the diplomats at the Congress of Vienna, the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle where – sorry, that says Vienna, it should be Aix-la-Chapelle, that's a mistake. But he rose to prominence, he was born in I think probably what is now Slovenia, which was then the Cisalpine Republic, one of these sort of weird places that was set up by Napoleon. And he had a career serving the Russian court as a diplomat at these congresses, and advanced so far that he was chosen, he was elected as the first President of the Republic of Greece when

it was liberated, partly through Royal Naval support in whatever it was, 1824, I think it was. You know, Byron having died in 1822 at Messolonghi. And I suppose that word republic is striking a bit of a bum note in this celebration of all these crowned heads and I think it brings us back to the conflict which was taking place in these years, because that spirit of liberation, which had led to the French Revolution, which led to Napoleon to some degree, hadn't gone away and certainly if it meant carving up the Ottoman Empire it was still very much alive and kicking. And I think if we then return and look at some of the other images, we can see, I think, how important the symbolism, the underlying symbolism in the official portraits is, stressing not just benevolence that I've mentioned already, but I think stressing some of the other ideas of the Ancien Régime, I think the most important being faith. It's usually said, for example, about this portrait that Lawrence, it's for a British King, Lawrence is obviously not a Catholic, there aren't a lot of portraits of the Pope in the Royal Collection, you'll be amazed to learn, and the only other one I can think of, the Pope is being stoned. So it's not a usual image, and it's often said, ah look, what's happened in the background is that Lawrence has included the Museo Pio-Clementino in the Vatican and shows the Laocoon and the Apollo Belvedere and this is celebrating the return of the classical statuaries and the foundation of the gallery in, by Pius, in the Vatican. And he's also there obviously because the Papal States were restored at the Congress of Vienna, so he is one of those crowned heads who was restored by all these diplomats. But I also think that this does not look to me like a secular image of a Pope. This does not look to me like somebody who's trying to say, I want to paint a Pope but I don't want to make him look too religious. It seems to me it's absolutely intensely religious and I think particularly the way in which he's made the Apollo Belvedere with this flash of light and the struggling figure of Laocoon, that looks to me exactly like depictions of the harrowing of hell, where a Christ figure bursts into hell and everybody's in torment and he releases them. The Pope has the keys of heaven and hell, that's what the keys mean on the top of his tiara up here.

So it seems to me that we've got very, very strong images, religious images in this image of the Pope and massively strong religious images in this image of, as I've already mentioned, the saviour, the defender of the faith, the Duke of Wellington. As also, very common in depictions of George III as a person for whom monarchy is a kind of mission, it's not about power, it's about duty, it's about serving a higher mission. And I think therefore that the imagery that Lawrence is using is trying to suggest not just that legitimate monarchs are being

restored, but the thing that gives them legitimacy, namely faith, the sacrament of coronation, the Church, these ideas are also being celebrated, threatened by the Revolution, defended by the heroes of the Napoleonic Wars.

And that, I think it takes us to the sort of quite reactionary aspects of the Waterloo Chamber, in particular, the inclusion of the restored French Kings, because the whole point about the Chamber was that it wasn't about defeating the French, it was about defeating Napoleon and the French Revolution and restoring the legitimate French monarchy. That was what George IV wished to depict and there are other commissions which indicate this. So here we have the most reactionary French King ever, Charles X and his son, the Duke of Angoulême, both painted for the Waterloo Chamber, or we assume painted for the Waterloo Chamber, these symbols really of the very worst aspect of the reaction which followed the defeat of Napoleon. But, and I want to finish on the but, I would contend that what the Waterloo Chamber shows, which is something which history generally showed, but you can see it even in this celebration of the Restoration, you can see how once the genie is let out of the bottle, you kind of can't put it back. And I think that where you see that is that the turbulent times, the date that we were looking at, all these people who were kind of 20 at the French Revolution, meant that it was an opportunity for men – I'm afraid it is generally men – but people of genius, from whatever background they come, and you see this, I think, particularly in the three-quarter lengths in the diplomats, because they obviously demonstrated extraordinary talent and they were chosen because they demonstrated talent, it was a meritocracy. So you have examples like the Duc de Richelieu, an Ancien Régime nobleman, ultra-loyal to the French King, escaped after the French Revolution, and worked for the Russian, as an exile worked for the Russians, and was the first Governor of what was called New Russia, which is the present Crimea, so back in the news again, and was really the founder of the city of Odessa. So at the top of the Odessa Steps – there they are, the Potemkin Steps, very, very famous – there's a statue and that's him, that's Richelieu. So this French nobleman suddenly crops up creating a new city. Similarly, we've already had Capo d'Istria, the first President of the Republic of Greece, here we have Charles William, Karl Wilhelm, Baron Humboldt, who was the founder of Berlin University. I mean you may have heard, Neil MacGregor has left the British Museum to head up the Humboldt Forum which is going to decide the future of thought in Europe for the next thousand years. And, you know, it's based on this man here. So this idea, the sort of ultimate kind of Enlightenment figure at

the centre of Europe, here he is in the Waterloo Chamber because he was serving the Prussian crown in the Congress, but he was doing a lot more than that. And here's his brother, Alexander von Humboldt, great botanist, predecessor of Darwin. So all characters from this sort of magic generation.

And I think the sort of final twist to the story, I would have said, is that actually this new spirit of meritocracy, it didn't just infiltrate the diplomats who are obviously going to be quite brainy and perhaps chosen on merit, it also infiltrated the soldiers. People like the Duke of Wellington is only the younger son of some Irish peer, he's only getting there because he's good at it. It also even infiltrates the crowned heads. Here you see Leopold of the Belgians who fought with distinction on the allied side, who by talent and probably rather wily forms of talent, but talent nonetheless, managed to work himself up the ladder, marry advantageously, and became the King of the Belgians at one of the early stages of the revolutions in 1830. And so what then happens, I think, is that when these restored monarchies are all toppled: in France in 1830; in Belgium in 1830; in France again in 1848; in Vienna in 1848. They're all falling apart, there is a kind of new form of monarchy which is there taking its place, and probably the most obvious example is Queen Victoria herself who is shown here, even by the time she is using the Waterloo Chamber for state visits, it's already out of date. The French crown has already been toppled and been replaced by the Orléans dynasty, by Louis Philippe who made a state visit in 1844 – this is actually the Russian Emperor, but the same events would have taken place in 1844 – and even after Metternich has escaped in 1848 in order to retire to Brighton, which is a sort of a natural end, Queen Victoria takes all this in her stride. So here we see her in Windsor next to the Waterloo Chamber in the Garter Throne Room investing Napoleon III, the grandson of Napoleon… I can't remember, whatever, yeah, grandson of Napoleon with the Order of the Garter. Two revolutions have taken place in France, but Queen Victoria sort of quite effortlessly adapting. And here she is again, visiting Napoleon's tomb with Napoleon III on the state visit to Paris in 1855.

So I think in a way I would conclude by saying that the world which the Waterloo Chamber represents looks like a world which is entirely turning the clock back, but in a strange sort of way I had little seeds within it that weren't doing that, that were sort of building a future which was not exactly like that envisaged by the French Revolution, but a little bit more like it than the immediate restoration, if that rather cautious note of optimism makes sense. And I

suppose if one wanted to sort of end with a slightly grander note of optimism, it would be to say Beethoven dedicated his Ninth Symphony to Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia. So this sort of miserable reactionary receives the dedication of the Ninth Symphony with this kind of massive paean to joy which isn't really joy at all, it's obviously liberty. So you kind of, it all does come around eventually in the right direction. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

[applause]

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