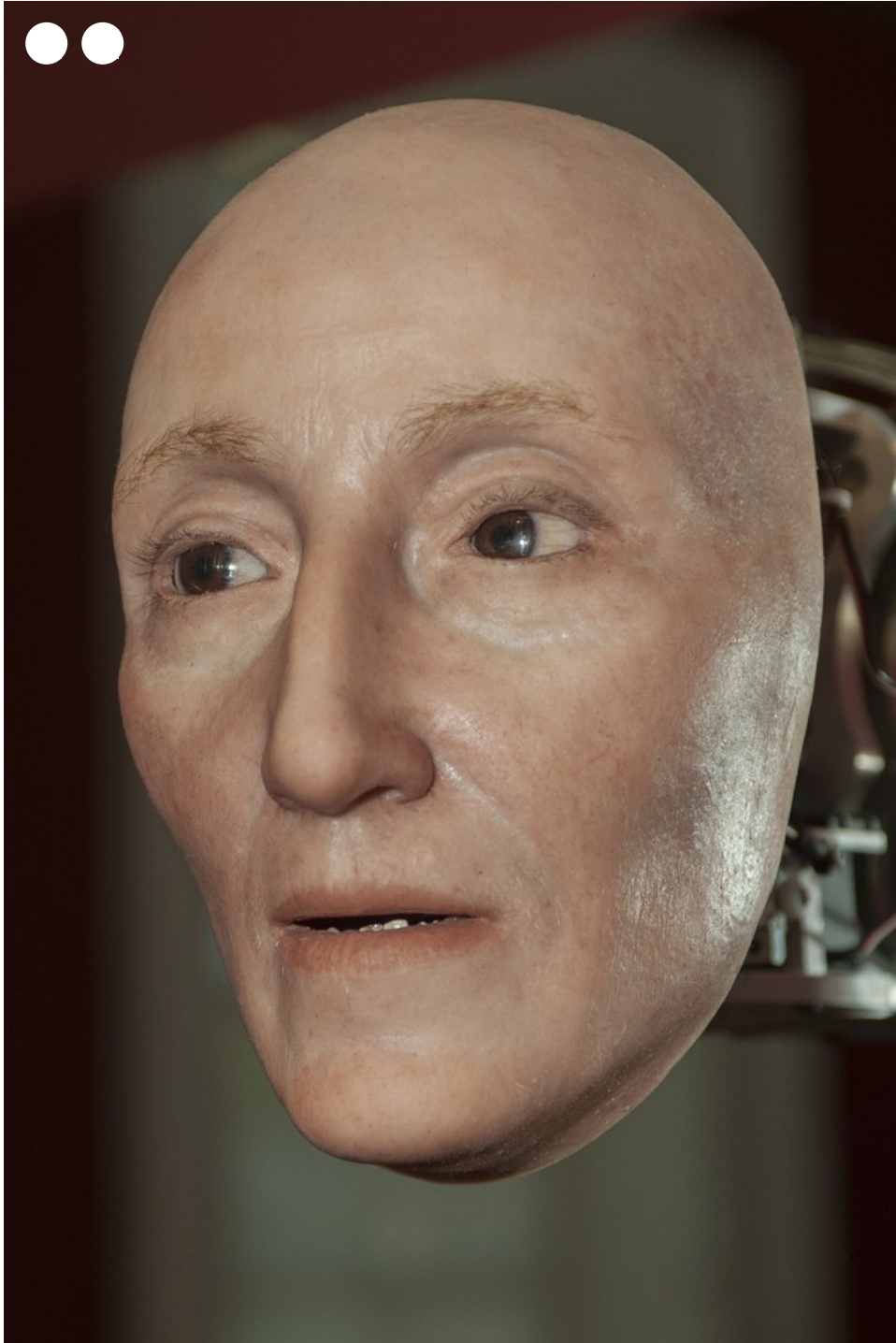


Queen Elizabeth I Has Returned From the Grave

by Stephanie Eckardt

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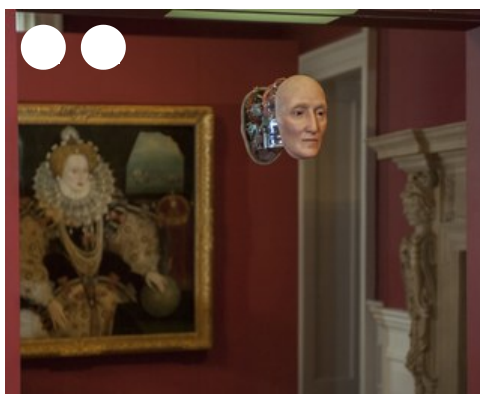
Installation image of Mat Collishaw's *The Mask of Youth* in the Queen's House, Queen's Presence Chamber, Greenwich.
© National Maritime Museum, London. Courtesy the artist and Blain Southern

Centuries before Melania Trump made waves with her clearly Photoshopped official White House portrait, not to mention the advent of the camera, a 55-year-old Queen Elizabeth I sat to have her likeness commemorated in the Armada Portrait. And now, centuries later,

it's getting a 21st-century update—which is to say, a reality check. That's thanks to the British artist Mat Collishaw, formerly part of the YBA crew with Damien Hirst, who wasn't exactly convinced by the prominent cheekbones and porcelain complexion depicted by his anonymous predecessor.

Painted in 1588, the Armada Portrait depicts the Queen in full regalia, laden with an enormous lace ruff and no less than seven pearl necklaces. It's also packed to the brim with symbolism, most clearly with the Queen's delicate, wrinkle-free hand atop a globe, which serves to both commemorate England's defeat of the Spanish Armada and underline her overall power and accomplishments in world domination. Collishaw, on the other hand, fit his symbolism into something much more compact: the façade of the Queen's disembodied face, sans crown, pearls, tiara, or buoyant hairdo. (Though if you look closely, there's still some hair to be found on her visage, particularly peppering her upper lip.)

Tellingly titled *The Mask of Youth*, Collishaw's hyperrealistic, animatronic mixed media installation goes to great lengths to depict what the Queen must have really looked like when she was sitting for her portrait: she repeatedly adjusts herself awkwardly, fidgeting her lips as her blinking eyes dart around. The less glamorous, more human aspects of the Queen, like her smallpox scars and wispy chin hairs, are fully visible here, as Collishaw—who, to be fair, didn't depict the black teeth she developed as a result of her notorious sweet tooth—was under no obligation to please or pass the approval of the last Tudor. (Though he has considered her reaction were she still alive: "I think she would be appalled," he told the Royal Museums Greenwich. "My head would be on the block.")



Installation image of Mat Collishaw's *The Mask of Youth* in the Queen's House, Queen's Presence Chamber, Greenwich.
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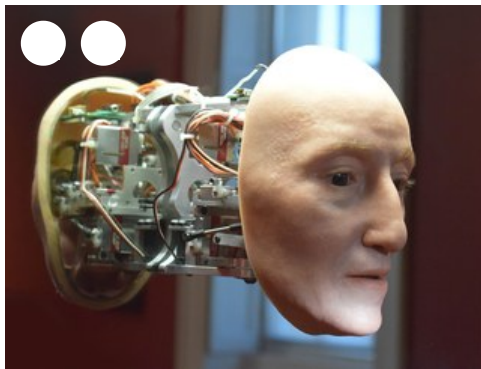
The Queen's head, on the other hand, will remain on view directly opposite the Armada Portrait through February 2019, allowing several months for visitors to the Queen's House in Greenwich to compare the two with the help of a large mirror, and for Collishaw's Queen herself to confront the juxtaposition. That's no doubt to the satisfaction of Collishaw, who's long explored the darker reality of image-making, embracing shock and

revulsion in the process. (When Dior tapped him to create a signature handbag, for example, he turned to his photographs of crushed moths and butterflies for inspiration.)

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Collishaw is not saying his depiction of the Queen—the product of poring over a collection of her (more forgiving) portraits, historical descriptions of her appearance, and a 3-D scan of her death mask—depicts the real deal. Instead, his main concern was to accurately depict the artifice in portrayals of the Queen like the Armada Portrait—the result, he said, of her "years of insecurity," which "led her to create a public mask which became fused with her private self."



Installation image of Mat Collishaw's *The Mask of Youth* in the Queen's House, Queen's Presence Chamber, Greenwich, photographed by the artist's father.

Photo by Maurice Collishaw

As Collishaw took care to point out to the Royal Museums, we may be in an age of filters, fake news, and "alternative facts," but "the manipulation of the images is as old as the image itself." The Queen, then, did the best she could before the advent of Instagram, even mandating her portraitists adhere to a so-called "face template" toward the end of her reign. In the case of her pale complexion, though, her efforts may have ultimately been to her own detriment: The white makeup she so heavily relied on turned out to have partially been made of lead.