

# DAVID LACHAPELLE PORTRAIT OF ALEXANDER MCQUEEN AND HIS 'MUSE' ISABELLA BLOW ACQUIRED BY NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

'Burning Down the House', a portrait by David LaChapelle of the late Alexander McQueen and his 'muse' Isabella Blow has been acquired by the National Portrait Gallery. This is the first portrait by LaChapelle to enter the Gallery's Collection and will be exhibited in the United Kingdom for the first time from Friday 14 October 2011.

The double portrait of McQueen and Blow was originally published in the March 1997 'Swinging London' edition of *Vanity Fair*. Shot at Hedingham Castle in Essex on 1 December 1996, the photograph shows McQueen in the foreground brandishing a flaming torch, accompanied by a playful Blow, with the castle dramatically burning in the background. Both were dressed in McQueen, with Blow also sporting a Philip Treacy hat, and the article named them '*The Provocateurs*'. At the time of the shoot McQueen was just 27 years old and had recently debuted his first couture collection for the House of Givenchy. Blow, 38 at the time of the shoot, was considered McQueen's muse.



*Burning Down the House*, 1996 by David LaChapelle © David LaChapelle Studio

Fashion designer, Alexander McQueen (1969-2010), grew up in London's East End and was apprenticed at tailors Anderson and Shepherd on Saville Row after leaving school at 16. He graduated from the MA Fashion Design course at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in 1994 and his entire postgraduate collection was purchased by Isabella Blow. Combining impeccable tailoring, rich historical and literary references and a provocative sensibility in his designs, McQueen was invited to take over from John Galiano as head of the Parisian fashion house Givenchy in October 1996. He left the fashion house in 2001 to form his own eponymous label. McQueen was named Designer of the Year at the British Fashion Awards four times between 1996 and 2001, and in 2003 was named International Designer of the Year by the Council of Fashion Designers.