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

David LaChapelle portrait of Alexander McQueen and his 'Muse' Isabella Blow acquired by National Portrait Gallery

LONDON.- '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

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'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.

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. Journalist, stylist and muse, Isabella Blow (1958-2007) was a leading figure in the development of British fashion in the 1990s and 2000s. She is credited with discovering and promoting the careers of important British designers including Alexander McQueen, Hussein Chalayan, the leading milliner Philip Treacy, and the photographer Juergen Teller. Her early career included such roles as assistant to the French designer Guy Laroche, assistant to US editor of Vogue Anna Wintour and assistant to the fashion director of The Sunday Times and Tatler, Michael Roberts. In 1989 she married the art dealer Detmar Blow and from 1993-7 worked at British Vogue. She was fashion director of The Sunday Times Style magazine from 1997 and editor-at-large for Tatler from 2002. Blow's innate and outrageous sense of fashion and flair as a stylist led to her discovery and patronage of young talent in the industry and made her a muse for several designers. Born in Connecticut in 1963, photographer David LaChapelle studied at the North Carolina School of Arts before moving to New York where he enrolled at the Art Students League and the School of Visual Arts. His work was seen by Andy Warhol and the editors of Interview Magazine when it was

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exhibited at 303 Gallery and they offered him his first professional job. Since then his work has appeared in magazines such as Italian Vogue, French Vogue, Vanity Fair, GQ, Rolling Stone and i-D, on many occasions on the cover. Throughout his career he has photographed a diverse range of personalities including Hillary Clinton, Muhammad Ali, Elizabeth Taylor, Lance Armstrong, Madonna and Jeff Koons and has expanded his work to include direction of music videos, live theatrical events, and documentary film. His work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions including those at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Barbican Gallery, London, Museo del Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City, Musee de La Monnaie, Paris and the Museo de Las Arts in Guadalajara. The portrait was purchased with generous assistance from Daphne Guinness, The Marrakech Gallery Foundation, 2011 and Fred Torres. It has been acquired from Fred Torres Collaborations, New York, and the National Portrait Gallery is also grateful to Robin Lee Navrozov for helping create this opportunity. Sandy Nairne, Director of the National Portrait Gallery says: 'I am delighted that this astonishing double portrait celebrating two highly influential figures in British fashion by David LaChapelle has entered the National Portrait Gallery Collection. I am most grateful to Daphne Guinness and The Marrakech Gallery Foundation, 2011 for making this acquisition possible, and to Fred Torres Collaborations for their support.'