

TALK: 'MINIATURE MASQUERADES' AT POLESDEN LACEY

JULY 10, 2025



BUT WHAT ARE WE TO WEAR?



Margaret Greville
dressed as Medusa
de Poudré at the
Bal Poudré, Warwick
Castle, 1895

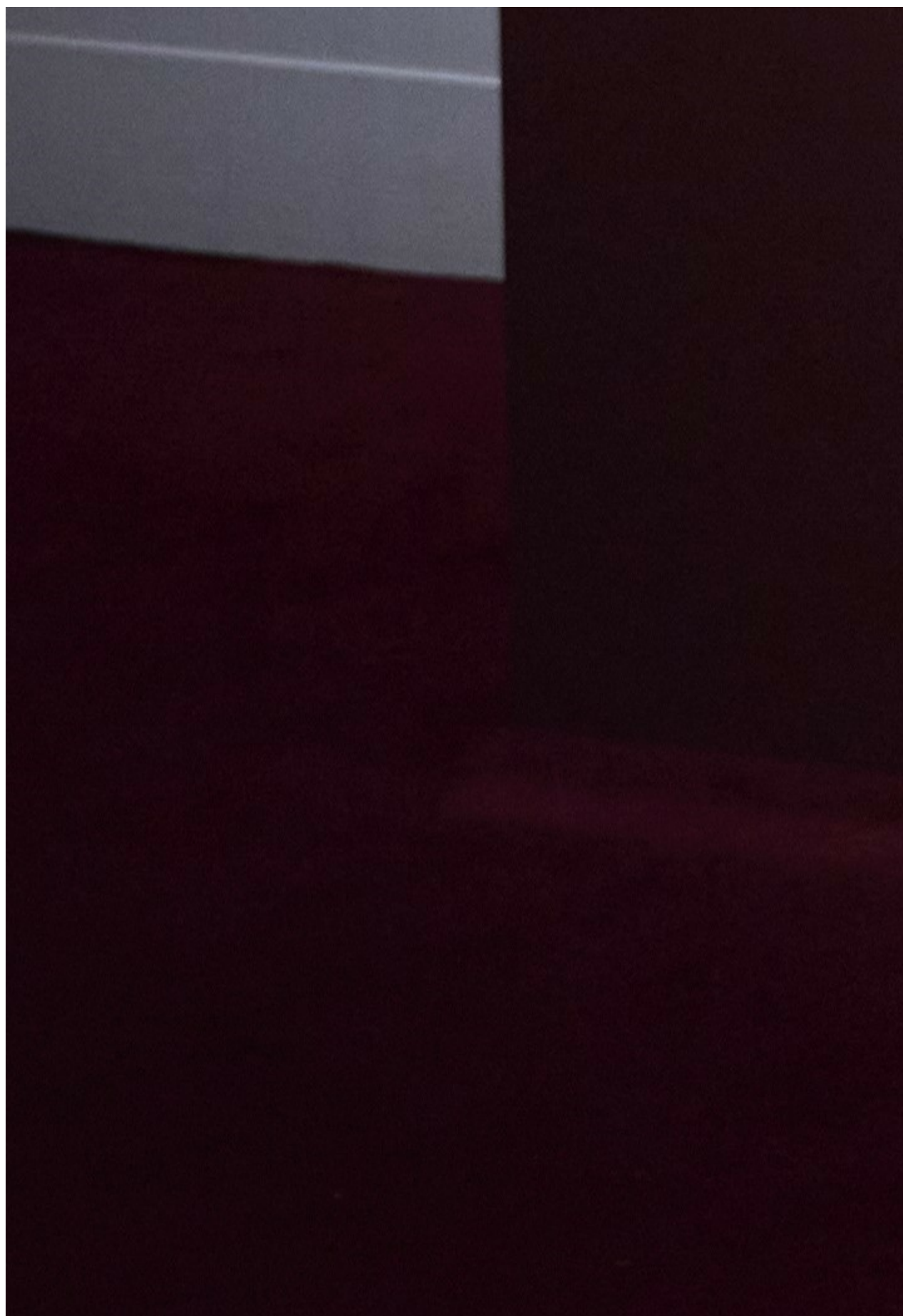
Always one of the best dressed women in society, Margaret Greville wore sumptuous costumes to the Countess of Warwick's Bal Poudré (1895) and The Devonshire House Ball (1897).

Guests dressed to impress. One reveller at the Devonshire ball went as a Valkyrie, a female warrior from Norse mythology. Her helmet, complete with metal wings, was so uncomfortable she got a headache. She did not remove it in case it ruined her hairstyle.

Fancy dress balls date back centuries. Masquerade (or masked) balls emerged out of medieval Italian celebrations like the Venetian Carnival. They were at the height of their popularity in the 18th century, around the time of Eva Maria Garrick's

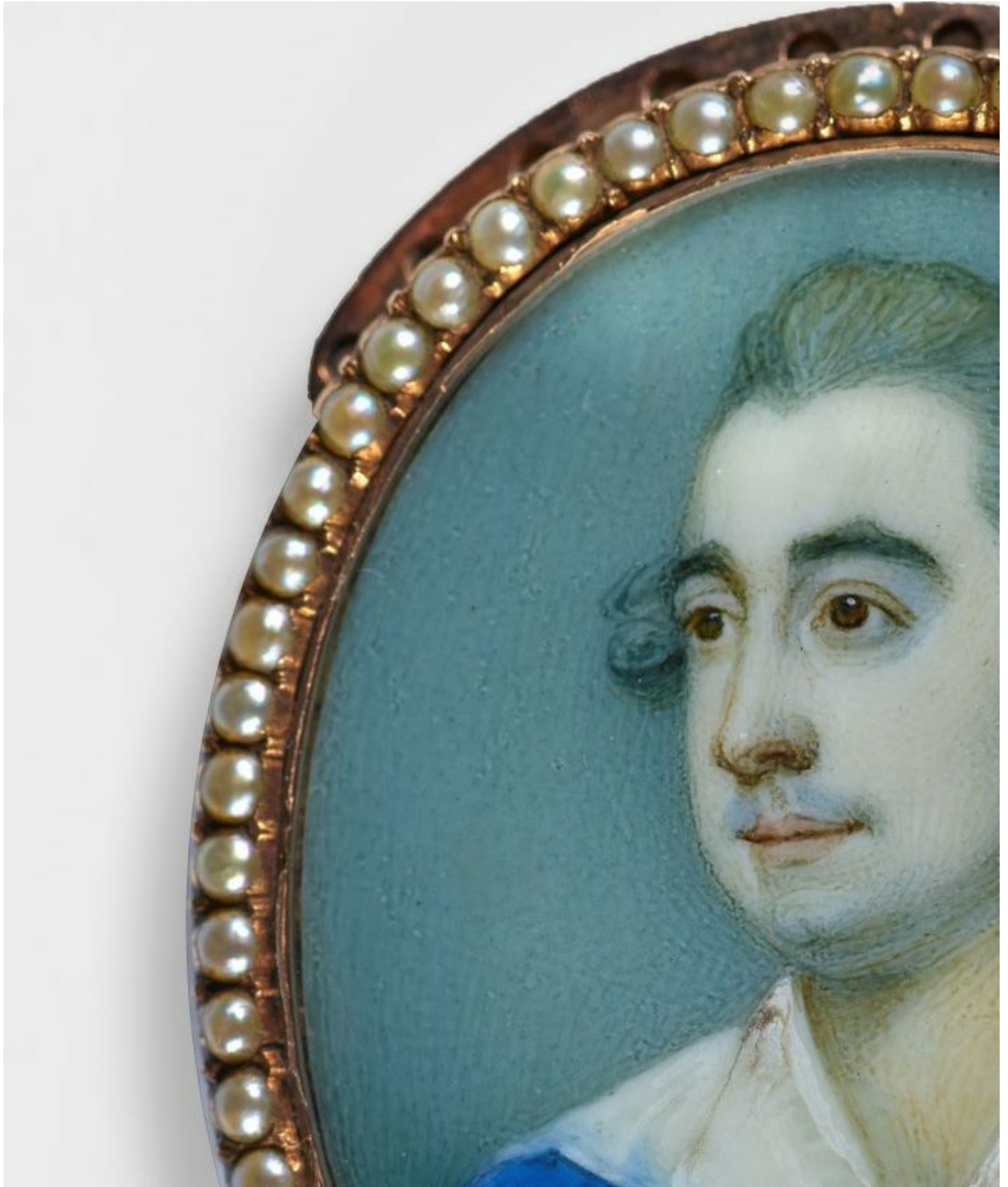
masquerade ball portrait - a treasure of Margaret Greville's collection.





Installation image of *Dress to Impress* exhibition at Polesden Lacey. Photography: Arnhel de Serra.

Our director, Emma Rutherford - recently appointed Honorary Advisor on Portrait Miniatures to the National Trust - will be giving a talk at **Polesden Lacey, Surrey (National Trust)** on **Thursday 10th July**. The talk, 'Miniature Masquerades' is part of Polesden Lacey's events programme for their current art and fashion history exhibition, [*Dress to Impress*](#).





RICHARD CROSSE (1742-1810) [Portrait miniature of an Unknown Man in 'Vandyke' Dress](#), c.1750; watercolour on ivory, metal and pearl - National Trust (NT 1246550). Photograph by: Matthew Hollow.

In the talk, Emma will discuss how miniatures were worn and displayed on the body - see for example the portrait miniature pictured above which is mounted on a bracelet clasp frame (the attachments at the top and bottom just visible) with pearl border surround. The talk will also examine the fashions depicted in miniature portraits, which was often more ephemeral and sometimes informal than that seen in oil portraits.

For booking and more information, please visit the National Trust website [here](#).