# Artworks removed from Downing Street under Keir Starmer's leadership



The Daily Mail has reported on a significant shift in the artwork displayed in Downing Street following the election of Sir Keir Starmer as Labour leader. A recent disclosure reveals that a total of 69 pieces of art have been removed from the Government Art Collection since his tenure began. This list includes portraits of prominent historical figures such as Elizabeth I, Mary, Queen of Scots, Sir Walter Raleigh, and William Shakespeare, which have all been "deinstalled."

This information emerged after what has been described as a protracted Freedom of Information battle with the Conservative Party, reflecting the contentious nature of the discussions surrounding cultural representation within the government.

In place of the removed works, new pieces have been installed, representing a variety of contemporary artists and themes. Notable replacements include "Altar," a depiction from the 2023 Falmouth Reggae Festival by artist Denzil Forrester, and "All Things Being Equal" by Nengi Omuku, a Nigerian abstract artist. Omuku's work is characterised by the use of oil paint on traditional Sanyanan fabric, aimed at conveying internal experiences. Additionally, "Almond Clasp" by British-Ghanaian artist Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, known for her poignant depictions of Black life, and "Still (III)" by Christina Kimeze, inspired by the revival of roller skating in Black communities, have also found their place in No10.

The changes have stirred controversy, with critics vocalising their discontent over the removal of historically significant figures. Five images of Winston Churchill have been taken down from both Downing Street and Parliament, alongside several portraits of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Furthermore, artwork representing senior Labour figures, such as Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and former culture minister Baroness Hodge, have been added as part of an initiative to enhance gender and ethnic diversity within the art collection.

Alex Burghart MP, the Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, stated, "It speaks volumes about this Labour Government that they have purged Downing Street of some of the greatest figures in British history," accusing the current government of succumbing to what he termed 'the wokerati' who, he believes, wish to dismantle Britain’s historical narrative.

In response, a spokesperson from the Department of Culture indicated that the rotation of artworks is a common practice, suggesting that such alterations are part of a broader strategy to refresh and diversify the collection regularly.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/10/13/starmer-removes-paintings-queen-elizabeth-i-walter-raleigh/> - This article supports the claim that Sir Keir Starmer removed portraits of historical figures such as Queen Elizabeth I and Sir Walter Raleigh from Downing Street, replacing them with contemporary art.
* <https://www.gbnews.com/politics/keir-starmer-removes-portraits-elizabeth-i-sir-walter-raleigh-downing-street> - This article also confirms the removal of Queen Elizabeth I and Sir Walter Raleigh's portraits from Downing Street, highlighting the controversial nature of these changes.
* <https://thecatholicherald.com/starmer-replaces-historical-british-paintings-at-no-10-with-anti-clerical-portuguese-artist/> - This piece discusses the replacement of British historical figures' paintings with works by Dame Paula Rego, an artist known for themes related to strong women and her anti-clerical views.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-62971671> - This BBC article might provide background on changes in Downing Street under Sir Keir Starmer, though specific details on artwork changes may not be directly addressed.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-art-collection> - The Government Art Collection's official webpage provides context for the rotation of artworks in government buildings, which is part of their standard practice to refresh and diversify the collection.