

HEW LOCKE

Louisa Buck, The best artist portraits of Queen Elizabeth II, from Cecil Beaton's fairytale glitter to Jamie Reid's punk provocation, The Art Newspaper, 30 May 2022



Hew Locke, *Koh-i-Noor*, 2005

Hew Locke has made many works portraying Queen Elizabeth II, all of which express his ambivalent relationship with the British monarchy and the nation's colonial legacy. This stems back to the artist's childhood spent first in Scotland and then in the former British colony of Guyana, followed by an adult life spent in Brixton, south London.

Locke's mixed media assembled sculpture from his House of Windsor series is made from an overload of cheap plastic toys and trinkets — disposable products of the global economy — which simultaneously create, adorn and undermine the image of the monarch.

The title refers to the Koh-i-Noor (“Mountain of Light”) diamond, one of the largest diamonds in the world, which was ceded to Queen Victoria the year after the British annexation of the Punjab in 1849. Since 1937 the giant gem has been set into the crown of the Queen Mother and housed with the rest of the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London.