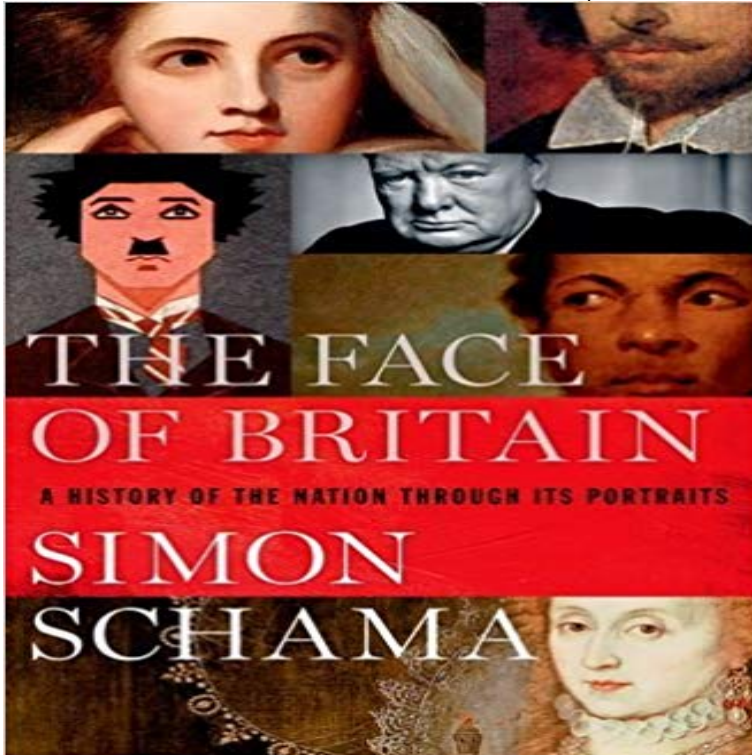


The Face of Britain: A History of the Nation Through Its Portraits



Author of a number of celebrated works, including the bestselling *The Story of the Jews* and *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, Simon Schama's latest book fuses history and art to create a tour de force of narrative sweep and illuminating insight. Using images from works—paintings, photographs, lithographs, etchings, sketches—found in London's National Portrait Gallery, *The Face of Britain* weaves together an account of their composition, framed by their particular moment of creation, and in the process unveils a collective portrait of nation and its history. Portraits, Schama writes, have always been made with an eye to posterity. Commissioned to paint Winston Churchill in 1954, Graham Sutherland struggled with how to capture the savior of Great Britain honestly and humanely. Schama calls the portrait, initially damned, the most powerful image of a Great Briton ever executed. Annie Leibovitz's photograph of a nude John Lennon kissing Yoko Ono, taken five hours before his murder, bears a weight of poignancy she could not possibly have anticipated. Hans Holbein's preparatory sketch for a portrait of Henry VIII depicts an unstoppable engine of dynastic generation. Here are expressions from across the centuries of normalcy and heroism, beauty and disfigurement, aristocracy and deprivation, the familiar and the obscure—the faces of courtesans, warriors, workers, activists, playwrights, the high and mighty as well as pub-crawlers. Linking them is Schama's vibrant exploration of how their connective power emerges from the dynamic between subject and artist, work and viewer, time and place. Schama's compelling analysis and impassioned evocation of these works create an unforgettable verbal mosaic that at once reveals and transforms the images he places before us. Lavishly illustrated and written with the storytelling brio that is Schama's trademark, *The Face of Britain*

invites us to look at a nations visual legacies and find its reflection.

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