

Kate's portrait – straight from the Twilight franchise



[Kate Middleton](#) is – whatever you think of the [monarchy](#) and all its inane surrounding pomp – a pretty young woman with an infectious smile, a cascade of chestnut hair and a healthy bloom. So how is it that she has been transformed into [something unpleasant from the Twilight franchise](#)? The first thing that strikes you about Middleton's visage as it looms from the sepulchral gloom of her first official portrait is the dead eyes: a vampiric, malevolent glare beneath heavy lids. Then there's the mouth: a tightly pursed, mean little lip-clench (she is, presumably, sucking in her fangs). And god knows what is going on with the washed-out cheeks: she appears to be nurturing a gobbet of gum in her lower right cheek. The hair is dull and lifeless; the glimpse of earring simply lifts her to the status of Sloaney, rather than merely proletarian, undead.

Royal portraits are, of course, a killer. It takes a very great artist indeed to pull off anything beyond insipidity, and the only recent [painting](#) of the Queen that is at all memorable – or has any pretensions to psychological insight – is, needless to say, [Lucian Freud's](#) – a kindly, even pitying image, but completely uncompromising. [Paul Emsley](#), by contrast, seems to have taken fear at the commission: at his best, he is a much better artist than this work suggests. A [portrait of fellow artist Michael Simpson](#), which won the BP Portrait award in 2007, was full of an ethereal tenderness and lightness. But his painting of Middleton lacks that sense of the delicate evanescence of the flesh: instead, she has been flattened into a curious Vaseline-smear, soft-focus dullness.