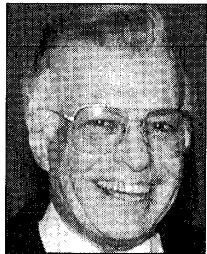


## TOURS &amp; DETOURS

## Seeing the Queen's paintings in the U.S.



Ralph Collier

**Q**uick: Where in all of America can you see paintings from Queen Elizabeth's own palaces? Run — do not walk — to the nearest telephone and make reservations now to journey to Richmond, Va., site of *Rule Britannia!*, a superb exhibition dealing with art, royalty and power in the age of the Jamestown settlement, the first permanent English settlement in North America. In the words of James Mellon, who was most generous to Richmond's Virginia Museum of the Fine Arts, where the installation may be seen until mid August, "There is no intellectual or emotional substitute for the experience of confronting an original masterpiece."

Commemorating the 400th anniversary of nearby Jamestown, this show of 16th and 17th century paintings includes unprecedented loans from the collection of Queen Elizabeth II. It is safe to say that there has been no comparable loan from the Royal Collection in recent years to any museum in the U.S. It is a significant group of grandiose, mannered portraits of British royalty, among them portraits of King James I and Catherine of Braganza, who was Queen Consort of King Charles II. All show events — battles, races, departures — in which the British royal family participated.

*Rule Britannia!* will not be shown in any other American museum. It includes the work of Rubens, Robert Peake the Elder, van Dyck, Jacob Huysmans and others. All paintings return to the royal palaces when this exhibition comes down.

Charles I painted by Daniel Mytens looks every bit the morose, vindictive butcher who made it unpleasant to live in Britain when he was alive. By deposing and executing the profligate Charles I, Oliver Cromwell sounded the death knell for the divine right of the kings.

In May 1607, just over 100

English men and boys waded ashore in Jamestown and decimated a native population who had lived in utter equanimity prior to their arrival. They eventually imported a slave force to rape the continent of its natural resources, primarily for profit.

The ideal place to hang your hat while in Richmond is the five-star Jefferson Hotel, one of the country's gems, with its five-diamond Lemaire dining room, the city's gourmand paradise. The room's formality notwithstanding, a diner is put at instant ease by the attentive staff in a formal world of crisp tablecloths, flattering lighting and subtle but delicious aromas. In the distant past, live alligators paraded in the Jefferson's Palm Court, debutantes pranced at costume cotillions and American royalty such as Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald promenaded in the famed Rotunda.

Over the years, Lemaire has come by its reputation honestly. Its chef concentrates on the fresh and the seasonal with an apt emphasis on seafood. He pushes the envelope with special ingredients.

Something of a rarity is the roasted rack of Shenandoah Valley lamb with wild porcini mushrooms, fresh French asparagus and

Carolina black rice, fresh and crunchy with spicy merguez sausage emitting a tangy flavor and shaved black summer truffles, the latter strong without being excessively spiced. Grand hotels and grand cuisine are essential companions.

A stunning surprise in Richmond is an estate called Maymont. With its hillsides, ravines, streams, rock outcroppings and views of the James River, it is sufficiently varied to provide great potential for elaborate landscaping, an essential ingredient of an upper class country seat. Its rugged exterior is a dramatic contrast to the glittering interior. As an example, the sumptuous drawing rooms recall the elegance of the Louis XV and XVI periods. On the kitschy side, there is the locally celebrated Swan Room with a suite of furniture embellished by carved swans that include a Tiffany dressing table and chair made of narwhale tusks (for shame!) and silver, chased with an interlacing animal motif reminiscent of early Celtic manuscripts.

Among Maymont's special attractions are the Arboretum and the outdoor live animal habitats, which include black bear and wild turkey sharing an old quarry site,



**To commemorate the 400th anniversary of Jamestown, nearby Richmond's Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is presenting the Rule Britannia! exhibit through mid-August, featuring paintings from the 16th and 17th centuries that hang in Queen Elizabeth's residences.**

water fowl, birds of prey, bobcats and beavers. A special delight is sitting in a horse drawn carriage riding throughout the estate. It is significant that the horses are treated most humanely by their caretakers, reflecting the philosophy of Leland Stanford, a contemporary of Maymont's owners, who stressed that "a horse should be treated like a gentleman." Horses were prized possessions and were treated as such. Today's horses on the estate leave the impression that they are still afforded tops in treatment and care. Where there are nice people, the stables are the real center of the

household.

For more information, please visit [www.2007.Richmond.com](http://www.2007.Richmond.com) and [www.visit.Richmond.com](http://www.visit.Richmond.com) or call 1-804-648-2007.

*Ralph Collier is a member of the Society of American Travel Writers, the International Food, Wine, and Travel Writers Association, and the International Motor Press Association. His syndicated programs are heard on 32 radio stations. Locally, he can be heard Monday through Friday at 10 a.m. on WRTI 90.*