



The Regal Twelve Alexia Sinclair

Agrippina - The Poisoness (AD 15-59)

Born into nobility, Julia Agrippina II was the sister of Caligula and great-niece to Tiberius, niece and wife of Claudius and mother of Nero. Agrippina's infamous reputation was that of an Empress and a poisoness. She was a true Imperial politician who did not stop at murder as a way to achieve her aims. She is believed to have poisoned Claudius by preparing his favorite mushroom, Amanita Caesarea, and lacing it with the juice of Amanita phalloides, the Death Cap. By eliminating Claudius she made her son Nero emperor and for some time influenced him as she had controlled her deceased husband. Nero tried many times to have Agrippina assassinated including three attempts at poisoning her. Legend states that, when the Emperor's soldiers finally came to kill her, Agrippina pulled back her clothes and ordered them to stab her in the belly that had housed such a monstrous son.

Agrippina – The Poisoness takes its lead from her notorious reputation for poisoning opponents with laced mushrooms. Agrippina sits, poised like a lioness, mushroom in hand, plotting the death of those who dare to question her. A femme fatale, Agrippina dared to live life defiantly flouting the natural flow of Roman order. Beside Agrippina sits a lion, symbolising Roman power and nobility. The backdrop is the Triumphal Arch in Volubilis, displaying Latin text alluding to the now ruined Roman outpost in Volubilis. A location highly suited to an often exiled Roman Empress. Agrippina's makeup pays homage to the makeup worn by Poppaea, the wife of her son Nero, who used bright blue paint for emphasising her breast-veins.

Christina of Sweden - The Androgynous Queen (1626 – 1689)

Christina was born into Swedish royalty. Her father's only heir, she was raised as a Prince, educated as a boy and adored traditionally male sports. Christina even took the oath as a king, not a queen. Growing up, she was nicknamed "Girl King" and, at the age of six, upon her father's death, she became the Queen of Sweden. Queen Christina launched a "Court of Learning" through her patronage of art, theatre, and music. Her reign was controversial due to multiple affairs with both men and women, in particular her lady-in-waiting, Countess Ebbe "Belle" Sparre. Some years after becoming queen Christina mysteriously abdicated the throne. She left Sweden, traveling as "Count Dohna" and disguised as a man. Relocating in Rome, she lived in a palazzo filled with art and books that became a lively centre of culture. Converting to Roman Catholicism, she became a favourite of the Vatican and is one of four women to be buried in the crypt of St. Peter's Basilica alongside the remains of the popes. Christina's "abnormal" interest led to her body being exhumed for testing in 1965, to determine whether she had signs of hermaphroditism, but the results were inconclusive. She is remembered as "Minerva of the North" for her patronage of learning and the arts.

Christina of Sweden - The Androgynous Queen places Christina in a forest. Adorned with feathers, she personifies the goddess Artemis, huntress and protectress. She wears a mask combining feathers of body painting, photography and digital illustration. The wearing of masks alludes to Christina's cross gender through the two faces of one Queen. Bow in hand and quiver on back, Christina is enjoying the tradition of hunting, a sport typically enjoyed by the male nobles and gentry of her time.



Isabella of Spain - The Catholic (1451 – 1504)

Isabella I of Spain, also known as 'Isabella of Castile' or 'Isabella the Catholic,' was born into the royal family of Castile, Spain. Her marriage to Ferdinand V of Aragon helped unite Spain. Financially supporting Columbus's journey (to America), Isabella brought Spain into a Golden Age of exploration and colonisation, creating a wealthy nation and the first modern world power. However, she also presided over the notorious Spanish Inquisition, whose treatment of religious minorities was harsh and cruel. Pope Alexander VI named Isabella and Ferdinand 'The Catholic Monarchs'. Isabella's 'Book of Revelation' promised salvation to the godly; the Spanish claiming to be the new Israel. Her illustrated bible; the 'Book of Hours', helped Spain to become the great Catholic power as it appealed to the non-literate classes.

Isabella of Spain - The Catholic depicts a cathedral in Toledo, Spain, originally sponsored by Isabella. The original painting has been digitally replaced with a painting from 1490 and the significance of this painting is in its contents. The figures include the Virgin surrounded by Isabella and family and the key figures of Isabella's governing forces. Every object within this artwork has been incorporated in postproduction and each is symbolic. Isabella, 'the catholic', kneels beside a stack of bibles, highlighting her fanaticism. Resting upon the bibles is a blood red quill, signifying the inquisition and the deaths that resulted. The pages of the bible sitting on Isabella's luxurious gown are from the original 'Book of Hours'. This pose combines both her religious fanaticism and the journey of Columbus as her gaze is fixed on the crusade ship in her hands. Chilies symbolise the return of Columbus from the New World with rich treasures such as spices and Inca gold. Scattered throughout the artwork are the original coins pressed from Inca gold displaying the embossed heads of Isabella and Ferdinand.

Elizabeth I – The Virgin Queen (1533-1603)

The daughter of King Henry VIII, Elizabeth was born at Greenwich Palace near London. Henry, hoping for a male heir, declared Elizabeth illegitimate, accused her mother of adultery and had her beheaded. Succeeding her sister to the throne, Elizabeth understood that effective rule depended upon popular support. Advisors urged the queen to marry to strengthen ties with allies and to produce heirs to the throne, but Elizabeth chose instead to marry England. Symbolically aligning herself with the catholic figure of the Virgin Mary, she was transformed from an illegitimate protestant woman to 'the virgin queen'. Her purification began with a physical transformation by cutting off her hair, whitening her skin and adorning herself in pearls. Her forty-five year reign saw England thrive through its increase in power and world influence. Playwrights such as William Shakespeare flourished as a result of the renaissance period, as did many philosophers and explorers. The reign of Queen Elizabeth I is often referred to as the "Golden Age" or the "Elizabethan Era".

Elizabeth – The Virgin Queen uses the game of chess to parallel her life, as her own survival as a monarch relied on the skilful maneuvering of political forces. She sits as a pawn, holding the orb and sceptre. These, along with the rings that cover her fingers are from the royal jewel collection and have been added in post-production. Elizabeth's hair is pure illustration and is embellished with pearls. Used as an extension of her crown, the hairstyle is also inspired by fifteenth century Italian ideals of beauty. The pearls are not limited to the hair as they also cover the queen's ruff, dress and eyelids. The radiating halo is the ultimate symbol of Elizabeth's embodiment of the Virgin.



Alexandra Romanov – The last Czarina of Russia (1872-1918)

Alexandra Romanov was born in Germany and became the last Czarina upon her marriage to Nicholas II of Russia. She was unpopular with the Russian people, because of her German birth and her notorious relationship with Rasputin. During the Bolshevik revolution the Romanovs went under house arrest and were finally executed by firing squad in the basement of the house in which they'd been imprisoned. It was later discovered that the family's crown jewels and diamonds had been sewn inside the linings of the corsets to hide them from their captors. The family was subsequently taken to the forest and buried. Alexandra's daughter Anastasia's body was never discovered and the legend of her survival continues to this day.

"Court Supplier" Fabergé provided one of the many luxuries that this excessive family enjoyed during its reign. Today Fabergé Eggs are regarded as masterpieces although, at a time of revolution, they had become synonymous with decadence. *Alexandra Romanov – The Last Czarina* places the Czarina in a forest setting, reminiscent of the Romanov's resting place. Alexandra wears a jewel encrusted gown, symbolising the jewels that were sewn into their corsets. Her vertical stance and expression is a reference to the disappearance of Anastasia. At Alexandra's feet lie scattered Fabergé Eggs symbolising the excessive luxury that led to her demise.

Boudica – The Celtic Queen. (AD 26 - 61)

Boudica was born into a royal family around AD 26 in England. Growing up, she attended a warrior school, learning to use a sword, spear and shield and her weapon of choice, the chariot. Boudica married Prasutagus of the Iceni tribe and they had two daughters. The Romans had invaded England in AD 43 and brutally humiliated Boudica and her daughters. Sources say she was publicly stripped and beaten whilst her daughters were raped. Infuriated, Boudica became the leader of a violent uprising against Roman rule. She led an army of 100,000 against the occupiers, slaughtering some 70,000 Romans. The Romans were quick to put down the rebellion by defeating the undisciplined Britons in a ferocious battle. It is said Boudica took her own life so that she would not fall into Roman hands. Boudica, which means Victorious, is now viewed as an heroic symbol of Britain.

Boudica - The Celtic Queen focuses on a triumphant battle scene. Boudica's status as a monarch is formally recognised through British Royal lineage and many of the articles excavated from her battlefields are contained within this artwork. Roman accounts described her as having worn a great golden torc around her neck; worn by royalty at the time as a crown. Other treasures include the Celtic shield and the numerous torcs that cover her body as well as the famed Tara Brooch. She wears a discarded Roman helmet and sword. A horse rears beside a Celtic chariot and both are embellished with Celtic symbols. Proudly, Boudica stands alone, her red hair spiralling to her knees. Her body painted with a Celtic design and muslin and she wears a modern kilt evocative of the Celtic tunics of the time.



Marie Antoinette - The extravagant Queen (1755-1793)

Marie Antoinette was the Queen of France during the French Revolution. Born in Vienna, she was sent to Versailles at the age of fourteen where she was married to the future King of France, Louis XVI. At this time, France was the most powerful nation in Europe, and the royal palace of Versailles, the most opulent. The young Queen threw herself into a life of pleasure, hosting opulent parties and going to masques in Paris; fully embracing France's style and fashions. She spent lavishly on her appearance, influencing fashion throughout Europe with her voluminous dresses and elaborate hairstyles, often reaching three feet in height. Resented by the French citizenry for her foreign birth and extravagant lifestyle, Marie Antoinette has gone down in history as the arrogant and apathetic monarch who said "let them eat cake" when told the peasants were starving. These days most scholars dismiss the attribution as revolutionary propaganda. The revolution swept Paris from 1789 and Marie was beheaded 16 October 1793.

Marie Antoinette - The extravagant Queen shows an opulent ballroom located in Palais des Ducs / Palais Ducal, Dijon, France. A large painting frames the Queen and is filled with notable revolutionary imagery. The most recognisable figure within the painting is Napoleon Bonaparte who later succeeded to the throne as Emperor of France. A figure representing Liberty holds the tricolore flag, a symbol of the revolution.

The Queen's vulnerable neck is exposed to the surrounding revolutionaries. She holds a decadent wedge of cake, the symbol of her indifference, excesses and ultimate demise. The famous French Queen, Marie Antoinette, is defiantly extravagant in life and death.

Catherine the Great - The Enlightened Empress (1729–1796)

The German born princess emerged from obscurity when she was chosen to become the wife of the future Emperor Peter III. Changing her name to Catherine, she read widely and familiarised herself with Russian conditions and values. Her fervent embrace of both the Orthodox faith and Russian culture, won her much love from the Russian people. Her husband Peter, on the other hand, was said to have the intellect of a child. Once he succeeded to the Throne, a group of conspirators, headed by Catherine's current lover, proclaimed her autocrat. Shortly afterward Peter was murdered.

Catherine began her rule with great projects of reform, creating the documents that became a guide for an enlightened code of laws. She was subsequently known as 'Catherine the Great' or an 'enlightened monarch'. Catherine embraced the principles of the Enlightenment and applied them to her territories, allowing religious toleration, freedom of speech, and the right to hold private property. She became known as patron of art, literature and education, creating the Hermitage Museum. Catherine wrote memoirs, comedies, and stories and had many lovers, three of whom were influential in government affairs.

Catherine the Great - The Enlightened Empress reflects on Catherine's reputation of having planned her political maneuvers with her lovers in her boudoir. The elevated perspective is intended to symbolise this battlefield / boudoir. Catherine's placement amongst Orthodox icons transforms her into a Russian icon herself. Her renowned style is celebrated through the embellishing of her hair and gowns as well as the body painted corset. Topped in a myriad of pearls and Imperial Seals, Catherine holds the quill with which she wrote her famous memoirs. The portrait contained within the fan beside Catherine is a painting of the Empress Catherine in life.

Eleanor of Aquitaine - The Eagle (1122 – 1204)

Eleanor grew up in the court of her father, William X, developing a lifelong love of music and literature. Her inheritance of her father's titles made her the most eligible heiress in Europe. Louis VI may have been King of France, but his land was far less wealthy than Eleanor's vast realm of Aquitaine. Upon William's death, fifteen year old Eleanor married Louis VII, shortly thereafter becoming the Queen of France. She was high-spirited and strong-willed. Eleanor and her company of 300 women joined the Second Holy Crusade. Her ladies in armor caused quite a stir, one eyewitness stating that Eleanor had dressed them as amazons and rode bare-breasted and pregnant. Some time later, Eleanor and Louis divorced and she married the soon to be King Henry II of England. The former queen of France became the Queen of England. Eleanor eventually retired to the Abbey Fontevraud, and upon her death, she was entombed in the Abbey, beside her second husband, Henry II and her son, Richard the Lionheart. She was called 'The Eagle' because she stretched out her wings over two kingdoms - France and England.

Eleanor of Aquitaine - The Eagle depicts a bare-breasted pregnant queen, dressed in French armour. Her exposed breasts and belly are body-painted as armour and bear her coat of arms, the three lions. The background is the real entrance to Eleanor's tomb in Fontevraud, France. Carved across the arched entrance are Eleanor's motifs; eagles signifying her nickname and lions signifying her coat of arms. Also the crowned King and Jesus Christ, signifying her husband, son and the holy crusades. Eleanor's eyes are locked with an eagle. This doppelganger effect is a play on the motif; Eleanor; The Eagle.

Cleopatra - The Seductress (69 BC – 30 BC)

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Cleopatra VII was the last Pharaoh of Egypt and the last of the Ptolemaic line. She became the Queen of Egypt when she was seventeen. It was said of Cleopatra that, when Gaius Julius Caesar marched upon Alexandria, she had herself smuggled to him inside an oriental rug. When the rug was unrolled, Cleopatra tumbled out. It is said that Caesar was bewitched by her charm and that a scandalous love affair commenced that very night. Seductive, charismatic and intelligent, Cleopatra proved to be a shrewd politician. She was the only Ptolemaic Pharaoh who could speak Egyptian as well as eight other languages. After Caesar's assassination Cleopatra realigned herself with the Roman general, Mark Antony. Caesar's nephew Octavian marched upon Alexandria, resulting in Cleopatra's loss of Egypt and the death of Antony. Upon hearing of his death, she had a basket of figs smuggled to her with an asp (an Egyptian cobra) hidden within. When she was discovered, the thirty-nine year old queen was found dead on her golden bed, and two pricks were found where she had allowed the serpent to bite her. The cobra bite was considered an honourable death, allowing Cleopatra passage into the afterlife.

Cleopatra - The Seductress portrays Cleopatra's famous suicide. The queen's entire body is covered in golden body paint, coated in a fine tracery reminiscent of Egyptian armory. The walls that form the background as well as the ancient Egyptian treasures that adorn both Cleopatra and her throne are sourced from excavated tombs of Pharaohs. The seductress is be-jewelled with scarab beetles, sacred to the Egyptians, who buried the dead with beetles as symbols of regeneration.



Olympias - The Sorceress (376 BC – 316 BC)

Olympias was the wife of the Macedonian King Philip II and the mother of Alexander the Great. She was suspected of involvement in the assassination of her husband, and others, to secure her son's leadership. Wielding great influence within Macedonia during Alexander's long battle campaigns, Olympias enjoyed periods as mistress of Macedonia.

A devout worshipper of Dionysus and reputedly a sorceress, Olympias was said to have kept pet snakes. The sorceress claimed that Alexander was descended from the gods, insisting that Zeus, King of Gods, had taken the form of the wind, moving through the leaves of the age-old oaks as she slept below and had impregnated her. A second version tells that Olympias dreamt of a snake that slowly slithered between her legs as she slept. She dreamt that its seed mingled with the seed of her husband. A third variation on this story states that Olympias was impregnated, not by King Philip, who was afraid of her practice of sleeping in the company of snakes, but by Zeus alone. Both Philip and Olympias dreamt of their son's future birth. In Philip's dream, he sealed her womb with the seal of the lion and Alexander was said to have the character of a lion.

Olympias - The Sorceress combines all three myths relating to Alexander's conception. Olympias lies on a stone slab, beneath an oak tree, the wind of Zeus weaves through the branches above and through her hair. Snakes slither around her and are a combination of photography and body painting. Serpents hang from the oak tree in the allure of temptation suggestive of Eve and the forbidden fruit. Another slithers up her leg, symbolising the mythological impregnating snake. Below Olympias lie a sheath and dagger, their inlay of golden lions a motif of Alexander, just as the golden box that once belonged to Philip is suggestive of Phillip's presence.

Elizabeth Báthory – The Countess of Blood (1560-1614)

A Countess in Transylvania, Elizabeth Báthory, was known as the "Countess of Blood" and is considered the most famous serial killer in Slovak and Hungarian history. Báthory is also credited along with her relative, Vlad the Impaler, as the two historical figures Bram Stoker's Count Dracula is based upon.

According to legend, Báthory struck a servant girl and drew blood with her pointed nails. When the blood touched Báthory's skin, she became convinced that it had improved her complexion. The Countess reasoned that if she bathed in the blood of young virgins and drank their blood, she would rejuvenate. She began to roam the countryside by night, hunting for suitable girls. She is said to have bathed in their blood in a huge marble bath.

Without trial, she was accused of torturing and murdering more than 600 women and sealed in a closet in her castle where she died four years later.

Elizabeth Báthory – The Countess of Blood reflects upon the legend of the vilified Countess. Symbolically, the moon exerts influence over creatures of the night. Running with wolves through a hazy dark forest, Báthory is lit only by a large full moon. Her blood red hair, her long pointed red nails with blood dribbling from her mouth, are all confronting elements that reflect the vampire myth. The image also alludes to the relationship between women and the moon. Báthory personifies the Greek goddess Artemis, The huntress. Standing high on a cliff edge, the gothic castle is a symbol of the home which eventually became Báthory's prison and then her grave.