



King Frederik X. Painted by Cathrine Raben Davidsen, 2026.

Photo: Anders Sune Berg for Frederiksborg.

240 × 140 cm. Oil on canvas.

Frame: Wooden frame finished with gold leaf by Frese & Sønner.

FIRST OFFICIAL PAINTED PORTRAIT OF H.M. KING FREDERIK X UNVEILED

His Majesty King Frederik X of Denmark unveiled Cathrine Raben Davidsen's new monumental portrait on Friday evening, letting the curtain fall before the painting of himself in The Great Hall at Frederiksborg. The first painted portrait of Frederik X enters a centuries-old tradition of official portraits of Danish monarchs, while at the same time belonging firmly to the present. Here, Frederik X takes his place in Frederiksborg's Gallery of Monarchs as King, in uniform and with decorations – but also as the person behind the monarch, with both gravity and gentleness in his gaze.



Their Majesties King Frederik X and Queen Mary attended the Carlsberg Foundation's 150th anniversary celebration at Frederiksborg on Friday evening. It was here that the foundation's founder, brewer J.C. Jacobsen, established a museum of national history in 1878 and continued the National Portrait Gallery. The anniversary celebration opened with the unveiling of the portrait, with The King himself letting the curtain fall before the new portrait of Denmark's King Frederik X. The portrait will now become part of the Gallery of Monarchs in The Great Hall, alongside 13 monumental portraits of members of the House of Glücksburg.

More than two years ago, artist Cathrine Raben Davidsen was commissioned to create an artistic interpretation of The King that would also respond to the opulent setting of The Great Hall, with its richly illustrated tapestries, gilt leather, carved ceiling and long tradition of official royal portraiture. In the new portrait, this tradition meets Raben Davidsen's contemporary artistic language. Frederik X stands as both admiral and monarch in the dark blue full-dress uniform of the Royal Danish Navy, surrounded by a painterly landscape inspired by Kongsøre Forest, while visible brushstrokes and transparent layers allow figure and nature to merge. The uniform, decorations and sabre maintain the formal and ceremonial character of the portrait, while the natural setting and personal details reveal other aspects of The King's story and identity. The portrait moves between tradition and change, man and monarch – adding a new chapter to the centuries-old story of Denmark's monarchs at Frederiksborg.

For Cathrine Raben Davidsen, a painted portrait is not simply a representation of a person's outward appearance. Throughout her artistic practice, the human figure has been a point of departure for exploring identity, memory and our place in the world. The same is true of the new work: *"It was important to me to create a portrait that belongs to our time, one that shows Frederik X as King while also capturing the person. What interests me is precisely the tension between the person and the role, the private and the official, nature and the institution, the present and history. That is the essence of this work,"* says Cathrine Raben Davidsen.

In The King's gaze, the artist has worked with both gravity and gentleness. At the same time, nature is more than a backdrop, and the symbols are more than decoration. They form part of the story of Frederik X, his family and the history of which he is now part as Denmark's monarch. Following the unveiling, Frederiksborg Director Ulla Tofte presented the portrait to the 220 guests in The Great Hall and thanked The King for having the courage to entrust the gaze upon him to an artist: *"Sitting for a painted portrait takes great courage. You entrust an artist with the interpretation of who you are and believe that art can add something that photography cannot. I am deeply grateful that Your Majesty has allowed yourself to be portrayed for Denmark's National Portrait Gallery at Frederiksborg."*

Ulla Tofte also emphasised that a portrait must contain both the sitter and the artist. In the new work, Cathrine Raben Davidsen portrays The King, while her own presence as an artist is equally clear. The result is a work that enters the long tradition of royal portraiture while insisting on its own contemporary expression.

As part of the Carlsberg Foundation's 150th anniversary, the evening also celebrated fundamental research and marked the establishment of three new Carlsberg Foundation Interdisciplinary Research Centres, designed to strengthen research across the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences.

Portrait and exhibition from 28 September

Visitors to Frederiksborg can see the new portrait in The Great Hall from 12 noon on Monday 28 September. An exhibition will open at the same time, taking visitors into Cathrine Raben Davidsen's working process. Through photographs, drawings and painted studies, the exhibition follows the creation of the portrait of Denmark's King. The process is also documented in a film shown in the exhibition.



ABOUT THE PORTRAIT

Admiral and monarch

Artist Cathrine Raben Davidsen has painted Frederik X as an admiral in the dark blue full-dress uniform of the Royal Danish Navy. The double-breasted jacket has gold-coloured buttons and epaulettes with four stars. The King wears the Order of the Elephant, Denmark's highest order of chivalry, on its pale blue sash. Around his neck is the Grand Commander's Cross of the Order of Dannebrog. On his chest is a selection of The King's Danish decorations, together with the breast stars of the Order of the Elephant and the Order of Dannebrog. The silver, eight-pointed breast star of the Order of the Elephant is worn uppermost. At its centre is a gilded medallion with a silver cross on a red ground, surrounded by a silver laurel wreath. Below it, The King wears the breast star of the Order of Dannebrog – a silver eight-pointed star bearing a white enamelled cross edged in red enamel.

The full-dress uniform also includes The King's sabre, worn in its scabbard on the ceremonial sword belt. The sabre belonged to The King's maternal grandfather, King Frederik IX, and was given to The King by Queen Ingrid in 1997. In this way, the attire connects The King's military rank with his role as head of state and with the history of the Danish Royal House.

Frederik X, nature and the details

Raben Davidsen has placed The King in an abstract landscape inspired by Kongsøre Forest beside Isefjord. Nature – here and more broadly – holds particular significance for The King. In Kongsøre Forest, The King completed part of his training with the Danish Frogman Corps, including the demanding running exercises that formed part of the programme. The area also reaches far back into the history of the Danish Royal House. In the Middle Ages, the forest formed part of the Crown estates, and it is home to a more than 200-year-old royal oak beneath which King Frederik VII is said to have liked to stand while hunting. Nature thus becomes more than a setting for the figure – it is not simply a background, but a link to The King's ancestors and an active layer of meaning within the work.

Several details connect past and present. The daisies are a tribute to Queen Margrethe, known as "Daisy", creating a personal and dynastic connection between the former and current monarch. Together with the oak, one of Denmark's national trees, they link The King's own story to the long history of the Danish royal line.

Brushstrokes and transparent layers

The King is immediately recognisable in the portrait, yet visible brushstrokes and transparent layers give the painting a free and open expression. The face and torso, in particular, appear precisely and carefully rendered in thicker layers of paint. Viewed at close range, however, a tension emerges between figuration and the dissolution of form: the face is made up of broader strokes that come together when seen from a distance. In The King's trousers, transparent layers lie one over another, allowing background and figure almost to merge. The figure appears and disappears at the same time. This is characteristic of Raben Davidsen's wider painting practice and reflects her interest in transformation: the body and identity as something not static, but in a constant state of change.

A work painted for The Great Hall

In creating the portrait, Raben Davidsen also drew inspiration from both the gilt leather and the tapestries in The Great Hall, adding another layer to the natural setting behind The King. The artist did not seek to imitate the tapestries' historical visual language. Instead, she was interested in the way they bring nature, people, history and symbols together within a single pictorial world – and in the decorative ornament of the gilt leather, with its curling acanthus leaves. She translated this principle into her own painterly language.



PRESS

Press material is available at frederiksborg.dk/presse. For interviews with Frederiksborg Director Ulla Tofte, Head of Collections and Exhibitions Mette Houlberg Rung, and artist Cathrine Raben Davidsen, please contact Head of Communications Sara Juel Andersen: sja@frederiksborg.dk / +45 29 74 75 53. Questions regarding the Carlsberg Foundation's 150th anniversary and the celebration in The Great Hall may be directed to Editor and Press Adviser Jane Benarroch: jb@carlsbergfoundation.dk / +45 31 64 00 10.

FAKTA

About Cathrine Raben Davidsen: Cathrine Raben Davidsen (b. 1972) is one of the leading Danish artists of her generation. She trained at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and has also studied at art academies in Italy and the Netherlands. Over more than 25 years, she has built an extensive and diverse body of work spanning painting, drawing, printmaking, ceramics, textiles and installation. Her work is characterised by a personal and poetic visual language in which references to art history, literature and mythology meet explorations of nature, transformation, memory and the human existential relationship with the world. The portrait of Frederik X is Raben Davidsen's first commissioned portrait.

Cathrine Raben Davidsen has exhibited widely in Denmark and internationally and has had major solo exhibitions at venues including Copenhagen Contemporary, Horsens Art Museum, GL STRAND, Rudolph Tegner's Museum, CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art Denmark and Kastrupgårdssamlingen. Her retrospective exhibition Let Everything Happen to You was shown at Copenhagen Contemporary in 2024 and subsequently at Horsens Art Museum. Her work is represented in numerous public and private collections, including the National Gallery of Denmark, the New Carlsberg Foundation, Trapholt, Horsens Art Museum, Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg and CLAY Museum of Ceramic Art Denmark. She has received numerous awards and grants and was appointed a Knight of the Order of Dannebrog in 2015.

About Frederiksborg: Since King Frederik VI began assembling and developing the country's foremost portrait collection at the castle in 1812, Frederiksborg has been home to Denmark's National Portrait Gallery. Following the devastating fire of 1859, which destroyed much of the castle's interior while parts of the portrait collection were saved, the castle was rebuilt and established as the Museum of National History, while retaining its role as the National Portrait Gallery. The museum's founder, Carlsberg brewer J.C. Jacobsen, wanted to create a museum as a great picture book of Danish history and to strengthen Danish confidence after a difficult 19th century. Christian IV's former ballroom, The Great Hall, became the Gallery of Monarchs for the Glücksburg line of Danish kings.

Today, Frederiksborg holds thousands of portraits of people who have made a difference to Danish society and culture – from monarchs and politicians to scientists, writers, artists and actors. Each in their own way, they have contributed to our shared history and identity and brought about change. Together with the history paintings, the portraits tell the story of defining events and periods across the centuries.

About Frederiksborg and the Carlsberg Foundation: The museum was established by Carlsberg founder J.C. Jacobsen and is owned by the Carlsberg Foundation, which has supported research in Denmark since 1876. Each year, the Carlsberg Foundation provides significant funding for the museum's operation. On 25 September 2026, the foundation celebrates its 150th anniversary, honouring fundamental research and the Danish foundation model, which gained international reach following the establishment of the Carlsberg Foundation.

