

Rare Banqueting House sketch saved for the nation

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Tate announced today that the first preparatory sketch made by Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) for his magnificent scheme of ceiling paintings in the Banqueting House, Whitehall, has been saved, thanks to the last-minute intervention of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Tate Members and The Art Fund, all of whom increased their original pledges on the day of the final deadline, 30 September 2008.

Image



The Apotheosis of James I and other studies by Sir Peter Paul Reubens

The vendor of *The Apotheosis of James I and other studies*: sketch for the ceiling of the Banqueting House, Whitehall 1628-30, whose family has owned the work for over two centuries, also generously agreed to waive £300,000 from the asking

price of £6million and accept £5.7million net of tax. The work was valued at £11.5million.

The fundraising campaign was launched by Tate in March 2008 working in close partnership with the leading independent art charity, The Art Fund, which granted £500,000 and later an additional £100,000 to help bridge the end gap. This is the largest gift The Art Fund has granted towards a single work of art. The major donor was the National Heritage Memorial Fund, a fund of 'last resort' for the nation's most outstanding pieces of heritage, which granted £2million in July and then in an exceptional move granted a further £221,000 to take us to the £5.7million on the last day. Tate Members made the second largest gift of £1.5million, including £45,000 from individual members following a direct appeal for support, to celebrate their 50th anniversary. This is the largest contribution made by Tate Members towards an acquisition. Tate Trustees committed £1million of Tate funds towards the purchase. The Monument Trust gave £150,000 and additional generous donations were received from Manny and Brigitta Davidson, The Michael Marks Charitable Trust, Danny Katz, Sir Harry and Lady Djanogly, The Basil Samuel Charitable Trust, The Flow Foundation and David and Susan Gradel via The Art Fund.

Stephen Deuchar, Director of Tate Britain said: "I am simply thrilled that the Rubens sketch has been saved for the nation and that it will now hang on permanent display at Tate Britain. This is the first Rubens work to enter Tate's Collection and is a unique treasure in the history of British art. It is the only sketch for the overall composition of the Banqueting House ceiling that exists, and by acquiring this painting we can begin to represent the magnitude of Rubens's importance in British culture. I am incredibly grateful to the National Heritage Memorial Fund, The Art Fund, Tate Members and the many individuals who have together recognised its significance and contributed so generously to secure it for us all. I would also like to salute the vendor's agreement to waive £300,000 from the purchase price in the final days of the campaign."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, said: "We really had to pull out all the stops to help Tate acquire this work by Rubens. There is huge demand for our money but we felt strongly that this particular work had to be saved as it is so closely associated with the Banqueting Hall in Westminster. As the nation's fund of last resort for heritage at risk, we decided exceptionally that we would add to our previous award of £2million to complete the fundraising package."

Francine Stock, Chair of Tate Members, said: "Tate Members was founded in 1958 specifically to help Tate acquire works of art and build the Collection. So we're delighted that, in our 50th anniversary year, a significant contribution by Members has been pivotal in securing the Rubens sketch. We have provided over a quarter of the £5.7million raised, which included £1.45million from funds and nearly £45,000 through an appeal to individual Tate Members - an astonishing response. We hope all Members will feel immensely proud of the part they played."

David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund, said: "It is a tribute to the importance of this work that so many have rallied to save it. Having stepped in at the last minute with an additional grant, this is now the largest sum The Art Fund has ever given for a single work of art. It is absolutely right that this, the only complete sketch of the Banqueting House ceiling, will join one of our greatest public collections and I'm delighted we were able to play such a central part in this momentous successful campaign."

David Starkey joined the public campaign to save the work in June when the sketch was united with the paintings of the Banqueting House ceiling in Whitehall for the very first time. Speaking about the sketch, David Starkey said: "This work is of the utmost significance to British history. The Banqueting House with its stunning Rubens ceiling is all that remains of the original Whitehall Palace after it was destroyed by fire in 1698. The ceiling was originally commissioned by James I of England and VI of Scotland to celebrate his achievement in bringing about the peaceful union of Scotland and England with his accession to the English throne after the death of Elizabeth I. The Banqueting House ceiling is the most important painting set within an architectural context in England and this sketch is the key to its composition. The loss of the sketch would have been a fundamental betrayal of our national heritage and I am delighted that it will remain on public display in London."

Rubens has always been recognised as one of the greatest painters in Western art and his ceiling paintings for the Banqueting House, Whitehall comprise the most important artistic commission of the period in Britain. *The Apotheosis of James I and other studies* gives a crucial insight into the artist's earliest ideas for the design.

The Banqueting House was designed by Inigo Jones and constructed between 1619 and 1621. Rubens was in London from 1629-30 acting as a diplomat working for peace between Spain and England. During his time here the commission to paint the ceiling was confirmed. This initial sketch was probably

painted in London and shown to King Charles I, James I's son, for approval. The final nine canvasses were painted in his Antwerp studio and installed in London around mid-March 1636.

The Apotheosis of James I and other studies is currently on display in Room 1 at Tate Britain.

Notes to editors

Tate Members is a charity dedicated to supporting Tate's mission to increase the understanding and enjoyment of British and international art. Tate Members make a remarkable to Tate's Collection every year and, since being founded in 1958, have helped acquire nearly 400 important works of art for everybody to enjoy. In 2007, Tate Members played an instrumental role in saving *The Blue Rigi* by JMW Turner and, in this past year alone, contributed over £5 million to Tate which helped fund key exhibitions of Millais, Louise Bourgeois, Turner Prize 2007 at Tate Liverpool and more. 2008 is Tate Members' 50th anniversary year - to celebrate, 100 key works to have transformed Tate's Collection can be found at www.tate.org.uk/members50

The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity. It offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections, campaigns on behalf of museums and their visitors and promotes the enjoyment of art. It is entirely funded from public donations and has 80,000 members. Since 1903 the charity has helped museums and galleries all over the UK secure 860,000 works of art for their collections. Recent achievements include: Helping secure Anthony d'Offay's collection, ARTIST ROOMS, for Tate and National Galleries of Scotland in February 2008 with a grant of £1million; putting together a unique funding package to ensure Dumfries House in Ayrshire and its contents were secured intact for the nation in July 2007; and running the 'Buy a Brushstroke' public appeal which raised over £550,000 to keep Turner's Blue Rigi watercolour in the UK.

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