

New £125million national collection will bring contemporary art to audiences across Britain

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A new modern art collection, to be known as ARTIST ROOMS, has been established, it was announced today, created through one of the largest and most imaginative gifts of art ever made to museums in Britain.

Image



Gilbert and George's *Existers*, part of the Anthony d'Offay Collection

The gift has been made by Anthony d'Offay, with the assistance of the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF), The Art Fund and the Scottish and British Governments. ARTIST ROOMS will be jointly owned and managed by National Galleries of Scotland and Tate on behalf of the nation.

The collection of 725 works, representing one of the most important holdings of post-war and contemporary international art in private hands, was assembled by Anthony d'Offay, whose London galleries played a key role in the promotion and understanding of twentieth-century art in the UK over a period of more than 30 years.

Anthony d'Offay assembled the collection through his gallery over 28 years. The transfer of ownership is being made under a part gift/part sale at cost agreement.

The cost of the collection to Anthony d'Offay was some £26.5 million, and he asked for and will receive £26.5million, i.e. the original costs of these works. The collection has been valued today at £125million.

Anthony d'Offay's guiding principle for the creation of ARTIST ROOMS is the concept of individual rooms devoted to particular artists. Many of these rooms were conceived as specific installations by the artists themselves. They have been assembled so that the work of important post-war artists can be seen and appreciated in depth. The primary aim is to create a new national resource of contemporary art that will strengthen displays and create exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout the UK so as to inspire new audiences, especially of young people. It is hoped that the donation by Anthony d'Offay will establish a precedent for philanthropy to be followed by other collectors.

ARTIST ROOMS takes the form of 50 rooms of contemporary art by 25 artists: Diane Arbus (3 rooms), Joseph Beuys (5), Vija Celmins (1), Ian Hamilton Finlay (1), Gilbert & George (2), Johann Grimonprez (1), Damien Hirst (1), Jenny Holzer (1), Alex Katz (1), Anselm Kiefer (3), Jeff Koons (2), Jannis Kounellis (4), Sol LeWitt (1), Richard Long (2), Robert Mapplethorpe (3), Agnes Martin (1), Ron Mueck (1), Bruce Nauman (2), Gerhard Richter (3), Ed Ruscha (1), Robert Therrien (2), Bill Viola (1), Andy Warhol (6), Lawrence Weiner (1), and Francesca Woodman (1). In addition, there are ten works by a further seven artists: Georg Baselitz, Ellen Gallagher, Richard Hamilton, Mario Merz, Charles Ray, Robert Ryman and Cy Twombly.

A series of opening displays will be launched in Spring/Summer 2009 and staged at Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland and a wide range of partner museums and galleries across the UK. The initial partners include Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums; De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill; Firstsite, Colchester; Glasgow Museums; Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; New Art Gallery, Walsall; MIMA, Middlesbrough; The Pier Arts Centre, Orkney; The Ulster Museum, Belfast and Wolverhampton Art Gallery. Additional galleries will be sought with which we hope to collaborate in 2009 and beyond.

ARTIST ROOMS will transform the nation's collections of contemporary art as a whole. It will materially strengthen Tate's ability to represent some of the most important art of the latter half of the twentieth century, and establish Edinburgh as a world-class destination for modern art. It will significantly enhance the way in which both institutions are able to represent post-war and contemporary art in their permanent displays.

The costs, which include the purchase of the artworks and set up and accessioning are £28million. These costs have been met by £10million each from both the Scottish and British Governments, £7million from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and £1million from The Art Fund. All taxes have been paid in full.

The agreement also includes a provision for the establishment of a £5million endowment fund by the National Galleries of Scotland and Tate, the interest from which will be used for the acquisition of further rooms by important contemporary artists and emerging young artists, ensuring that the collection can continue to grow in the future. An initial contribution of £500,000 each from the National Galleries of Scotland and Tate has been made towards the £5million endowment fund.

The museums have asked Anthony d'Offay, to serve as an unpaid ex officio curator for a period of five years, and he has agreed. Anthony d'Offay's donation also includes the gallery archive of over 1,000 boxes which provides a unique record of contemporary art over a thirty year period.

John Leighton, Director of the National Galleries of Scotland, said: "Anthony d'Offay's immense generosity and powerful vision lie behind this innovative partnership. At a stroke our level of ambition has been raised to a new height and there is now the potential to bring great modern art to our publics, not just in Edinburgh and London, but right across the country, from St Ives to Stromness."

Nicholas Serota, Director of Tate, said: "A gift of this magnitude will completely transform the opportunity to experience contemporary art in the UK. Anthony d'Offay's imaginative generosity establishes a new dynamic for national collections and is without precedent anywhere in the world."

Carole Souter, Director of NHMF, said: "Anthony d'Offay's wonderful collection of modern and contemporary art is one of the most important in private hands anywhere in the world. The National Heritage Memorial Fund's £7million grant is safeguarding an extraordinarily rich collection of works for future generations to explore and enjoy."

David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund, said: "The Art Fund has long supported Anthony d'Offay's determination to find a way to give everyone a chance to discover and explore his extraordinary collection. As we have often said, our museums and galleries have rarely been able to buy the best works being produced by artists living in other countries. With exceptional generosity Anthony has given us a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform our collections of

international modern art. The Art Fund is proud to have had a hand in bringing this long negotiation to such a successful conclusion, and thrilled to play its part in enabling the collection to be seen all around the country."

Notes to editors

Anthony d'Offay

Born in Sheffield in 1940, Anthony d'Offay studied art at Edinburgh University, graduating in 1962. Whilst at the University, he fell in love with the collections of the National Gallery of Scotland. Years later he described walking round the galleries on The Mound as "the defining experience of my life".

In 1969, the year in which the gallery moved to Dering Street, he organised the ground breaking Abstract Art in England 1913-1915, which became an Arts Council touring show. Exhibitions followed dedicated to the largely forgotten period of English painting from 1910 to 1940, including Vorticism, Bloomsbury and the Camden Town Group. Scholarly shows included Jacob Epstein, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Spencer Gore, Gwen John, Stanley Spencer, Wyndham Lewis and Eric Gill.

Anthony d'Offay became interested in contemporary art and began to include shows by living artists in the gallery's programme. These included Lucian Freud in 1972, Gilbert & George, 1972, Michael Andrews, 1974, William Coldstream, 1976, Eduardo Paolozzi 1977, Frank Auerbach, 1978, Richard Long, 1978 and Richard Hamilton in 1980.

In 1977 he married Anne Seymour, a curator with many years experience in the Modern Collection at the Tate Gallery, who had a special interest in avant-garde international art. In 1980 they opened a gallery for contemporary art 23 Dering Street, a uniquely large space for London at that time. They, together with Marie-Louise Laband, Director of the gallery, inaugurated a programme of international contemporary art, starting with a seminal exhibition by Joseph Beuys, Stripes from the House of the Shaman in August 1980. The intention was to show the greatest contemporary art being made, much of which was largely unknown to the British public at that time.

Over the years, the gallery in London presented a large number of highly acclaimed exhibitions by some of the greatest artists of our time. Many of these shows later travelled to public institutions in Britain and abroad. In addition to the shows made for the spaces in London, the Gallery was involved in organising

important exhibitions for museums and public galleries around the world. The gallery closed in 2001.

Anthony d'Offay has brought many important exhibitions to Edinburgh including Joseph Beuys, Gilbert & George, Jasper Johns, Jeff Koons, Jannis Kounellis, Ed Ruscha and Robert Mapplethorpe. Most recently at the Royal Scottish Academy he initiated two major Festival exhibitions: in 2006 Ron Mueck attracted more than 125,000 visitors and last year's Andy Warhol: A Celebration of Life and Death was seen by nearly 100,000 people.

The Art Fund

The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity. It offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections and campaigns widely on behalf of museums and their visitors. 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. In January 2007 The Art Fund successfully led the public appeal to save JMW Turner's *Blue Rigi* for Tate, and in July 2007 was instrumental in putting together a unique funding package to ensure Dumfries House in Ayrshire was secured for the nation. Independent of government, The Art Fund is uniquely placed to campaign on behalf of public collections across the UK and led the campaign to extend free admission to all national museums and galleries, which achieved success in 2001.

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