

Ashmolean unveils acquisitions

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From Samuel Palmer to Paul Nash, this exhibition comprises some of the most striking and important acquisitions in the field of British drawings and watercolours made by the Ashmolean over the last six years.

Image



Samuel Palmer's *The Prospect*

The selection includes gifts, bequests and purchases of national importance, along with others of more local interest. Dating from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, the landscapes and figure subjects cover a broad range of media from pencil to watercolour and pastel.

Among the highlights is *The Prospect* by Samuel Palmer. On display at the Ashmolean for the first time, the watercolour was purchased in 2005 with the assistance of a £45,000 grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Additional funding came from The Art Fund, the UK's leading independent art charity, and the MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund, as well as the proceeds from a public appeal to mark the bicentenary of the artist's birth. This will be joined by Palmer's *Yellow Twilight*, one of the last works from his Shoreham period to remain in private hands, until it was accepted by H.M. Government in lieu of inheritance tax earlier this year, and allocated to the Museum. The other great

English Romantic artist JMW Turner (1775-1851), is represented by a magnificent view of Christ Church, Oxford which he made c.1832.

Among the many gifts received in recent years none have been more significant than the group of works presented by the Christopher Sands Trust in 2001, from which features *Noctes Ambrosianae*, a pastel of the interior of the Middlesex Music Hall by Walter Sickert, 1906. Through The Art Fund, Prof Luke Herrmann, a former Assistant Keeper in the Ashmolean presented a group of drawings he had inherited from the editor and proprietor of the Illustrated London News, Sir Bruce Ingram. These include the first watercolour by Richard Parkes Bonington to enter the Ashmolean's collection and a design by Sir James Thornhill for the chapel of All Souls College.

Additional drawings of local interest are An Exhibition at the Old Town Hall in 1854 by George Pyne, depicting several of the Pre-Raphaelite masterpieces later bequeathed to the Ashmolean by Thomas Combe, and Wittenham Clumps, a striking drawing by Paul Nash of the distinctive landmark near Didcot.

Works from the later twentieth century include a sketchbook of nude studies of Beatrice Warde, by Eric Gill, purchased in 2003; watercolours by John Piper bequeathed to the Ashmolean by Robert and Rena Lewin in 2005, and a lively early work by Michael Ayrton, presented by the Friends of the Ashmolean to commemorate the chairmanship of His Honour Paul Clark.

Notes to editors

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 has 80,000 members. Since its foundation in 1903, The Art Fund has helped UK public collections acquire over 850,000 works of art, ranging from Bronze Age treasures to contemporary works of art. In 2005 The Art Fund offered over £4.1million to museums and galleries and distributed 12 gifts and bequests. Independent of government, The Art Fund was at the forefront of the campaign for free admission in 2001 and the campaign to save the Macclesfield Psalter in 2005.

The MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund

The MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund is a government fund, established at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in 1881 as part of its nationwide work. The annual grants budget, currently £1,000,000 is provided by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). The Fund supports the acquisitions of objects relating to the arts, literature and history by regional museums, record offices and specialist libraries in England and Wales. Each year it considers over 300 applications and in 2005-6 awarded grants to 104 organisations, enabling acquisitions of over £4million to go ahead. 2006 marks the Fund's 125th anniversary. Visit the website at www.vam.ac.uk/purchasegrantfund.

The Ashmolean

With support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Ashmolean is planning a major development to build on its strengths as a world-class museum. By improving the display and interpretation of its collections, the Ashmolean will reach out more effectively to a wider audience. Leading architect Rick Mather has created a design to transform the building into a museum for a 21st century public.

Admission to the Ashmolean is free.

Opening times: Tuesdays – Saturdays, Bank Holiday Mondays 10.00 – 5.00pm, Sundays 12.00 – 5.00pm. The Museum is closed on Mondays.

Further information

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