

John Donne secured

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Today, The National Portrait Gallery is delighted to announce that the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) has agreed to contribute £750,000 towards the acquisition of the portrait of John Donne. This very generous grant will help to secure the portrait for the nation.

Image



Portrait of John Donne

Painted in about 1595, the *John Donne* work has been the subject of a major National Portrait Gallery appeal since January 2006. The Gallery is also particularly indebted to The Art Fund for leading the campaign for helping to initiate the campaign with their support of £200,000.

The painting is a portrait of unmistakable national importance. It is one of the earliest English author portraits and is the most famous of all Elizabethan love

portraits. The picture has an impeccable provenance and was bequeathed to an ancestor of the current owner in John Donne's will.

The appeal has been remarkable for the large number of donations from members of the public - contributing over £40,000 - and indicating the degree of public affection for this portrait. Together with the Gallery's own contribution and pledges from a number of other donors, the total sum raised to date is a £1,283,943. The figure of £116,057 is outstanding and needs to be raised by June this year.

The Gallery urges everyone with an interest in John Donne to help the National Portrait Gallery in the final stages of its campaign, buy this remarkable portrait for all to enjoy.

The portrait can be seen in the Gallery's Searching for Shakespeare exhibition, until 29 May. If the Gallery is successful in raising all the funds by June this year the painting will undergo a conservation assessment and be put on permanent public display.

Sandy Nairne, Director of the National Portrait Gallery says: "I am delighted that a really substantial grant has been offered by the National Heritage Memorial Fund, which together with the contribution from The Art Fund, the help of the Executors of Lord Lothian's estate and the extraordinary response of the public, means that we are a really significant way towards reaching our target."

Stephen Johnson, Head of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, says: "John Donne is one of this nation's greatest poets and his 16th century poems continue to dazzle us in the 21st century. Although his words are famous, few people know what he looked like in real life. This NHMF grant will help the National Portrait Gallery to acquire this remarkable painting of Donne and display it alongside portraits of his literary contemporaries and other national favourites such as Shakespeare and Jonson for many future generations to enjoy."

David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund says: "This brooding, sensual portrait of a young man in love magnificently echoes Donne's own love poems - some of the greatest in the English language. The Art Fund welcomes the National Heritage Memorial Fund's decision to help the campaign with this generous grant. Now all efforts must be made to raise the last £116,000 to ensure that the painting is kept on public display".

Donations to the National Portrait Gallery John Donne Appeal can be made online at www.npg.org.uk/johndonne or by calling Charlotte Savery on 020 7312 2444.

Notes to editors

John Donne (1572-1631), c.1595

Unknown English artist, Oil on panel, 724 (281/2 x 235/8in) inscribed around the edge of the oval: 'illumine tenbr(as) nostras domina' (O Lady Lighten Our Darkness)

The executors of the estate of the late Lord Lothian have agreed, through Sotheby's, to reduce the gross price from £2.36million to £2million to facilitate the sale of this painting. After tax concessions, this means the Gallery now had to raise a total of £1.4million to acquire the portrait.

The Art Fund

The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity, funded by its membership and donations, and dedicated to saving art for everyone to enjoy.

In 2005 The Art Fund offered over £4.1million to museums and galleries, including grants towards the Macclesfield Psalter and the Viotti Stradivarius, and distributed 12 gifts and bequests.

Last week The Art Fund unveiled its first commission, the James Turrell Deer Shelter, at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Further information

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