

National Heritage Memorial Fund - 25 years in the frame

24 September 2005

This Saturday (24 September) the National Gallery opens a special exhibition in the recently refurbished Room 1 to celebrate the National Heritage Memorial Fund's Silver Jubilee

Image



National Gallery

Christ taking leave of his Mother by Albrecht Altdorfer

Image



National Gallery

Landscape with Psyche outside the Palace of Cupid ('The Enchanted Castle') by Claude

Image



National Gallery

The Triumph of Pan by Poussin

Image



National Gallery

The Concert by Hendrick Ter Brugghen

Image



National Gallery

Mr and Mrs Thomas Coltman by Wright of Derby

Image



National Gallery

River Landscape with Horseman and Peasants by Cuyp

Image



Lady with a Squirrel and a Starling by Holbein the Younger

The NHMF is a unique fund, originally set up to save the very best of our national heritage as a living memorial to those who gave their lives for the UK in armed conflict. Over the past 25 years, the NHMF has played a crucial part in protecting the UK's heritage saving over 1,200 treasured iconic works of art, objects and

places that might have otherwise been lost, amounting to over £220million of support.

Stephen Johnson, Head of NHMF, commented: “The NHMF is the fund of last resort and has often been called upon to save a national treasure in its hour of need. From the many precious works of art that are on display here to icons like the Flying Scotsman and our world famous landscapes, the immense treasure trove of heritage the NHMF has saved for the nation acts as a lasting reminder of the rich history of the UK and a poignant memorial to those who gave their lives for this country. Every item saved is part of our shared inheritance - whose loss would be a national tragedy.”

The exhibition ‘The National Heritage Memorial Fund: 25 years of supporting the National Gallery’ will commemorate the joint achievement of the National Gallery and the NHMF in preserving for the public a group of works of exceptional artistic and historical significance.

The exhibition brings together a group of seven celebrated paintings acquired by the National Gallery with the support of the NHMF. Among them are Holbein’s *Lady with a Squirrel and Starling*, acquired in 1993 with the help of a grant of £3.5million, and Claude’s *Enchanted Castle*, acquired in 1981 with a contribution from the NHMF of £825,000. This painting influenced the romantic writers of the 19th Century and is said to have inspired Keats’ *Ode to a Nightingale*.

Commenting on the exhibition, Charles Saumarez Smith, Director of the National Gallery, said: ‘We are delighted to be able to join the NHMF’s Silver Jubilee celebrations by staging this exhibition which brings together a group of tremendously important paintings, which would almost certainly have been lost to the nation without the Fund’s support’.

This exhibition coincides with the Gallery’s own unveiling to the public of their beautiful new portico entrance – a further reason to ensure a re-visit to this most famous of art havens.

Notes to editors

There will be a Press Preview of ‘The National Heritage Memorial Fund: 25 years of supporting the National Gallery’ on Wednesday 21st September, at 11.30am. Curator Lucy Davis will be on hand to explain the context and history behind each of the paintings.

The public exhibition runs from 24th September – 30th October 2005, Room 1, National Gallery. Admission Free.

Additional events that will celebrate the NHMF's Silver Jubilee include a special exhibition at the British Museum, London from 24 October 2005. For a full list of events across the UK, please visit www.nhmf.org.uk

The NHMF gratefully recognises the generous support from Christie's, AXA Art and Farrer & Co for its Silver Jubilee celebrations.

The seven paintings that will be shown and the order in which they were acquired are as follows:

1. *Christ taking leave of his Mother* by Altdorfer. NG6463. The acquisition of this painting strengthened the collection of German paintings at the National Gallery, then relatively under-represented. Works by Altdorfer are exceptionally rare: this painting and the *Landscape with a Footbridge* (Room 4) are the only two works by the artist in this country. The painting was bought for £2.45million by the National Gallery in 1980 from the Wernher Collection at Luton Hoo, only months after the NHMF was founded. Without the intervention of the NHMF, which gave £825,000, the National Art Collections Fund (Eugene Cremetti) and the Pilgrim Trust, the painting would have been sold at auction, and almost certainly have been exported.
2. *Landscape with Psyche outside the Palace of Cupid ('The Enchanted Castle')* by Claude. NG6471. This painting was on loan to the National Gallery until 1974, when it was bought by the Gallery in 1981 for £1.35million with the aid of £500,000 from the NHMF and a grant from the National Art Collections Fund.
3. *The Triumph of Pan* by Poussin. NG6477. This painting was one of seven works by Poussin to enter British collections in 1741. In 1850 it was bought for £1,239 by the art collector and Liberal M.P., James Morrison and remained in the possession of his descendents at Sudeley Castle until it was sold to the National Gallery. It was purchased in 1982 for £1.3million, to which the NHMF contributed a grant of £200,000, and with the support of the National Art Collections Fund.
4. *The Concert* by Ter Brugghen. NG6496. This painting demonstrates the artist's skill in representing the effects of candlelight. It came to England around 1700, when it was bought by the distinguished collector Lord Somers, who was Lord Chancellor to King William III. The painting was acquired by the National Gallery in 1983 for a little over £1.7million with a £500,000 grant from the NHMF and with donations from the National Art Collections

Fund and the Pilgrim Trust.

5. *Mr and Mrs Thomas Coltman* by Wright of Derby. NG6496. Wright painted this elegant portrait of Thomas Coltman and his first wife Mary in 1770/1. Wright portrays the Coltmans outdoors at Gate Burton House, near Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, about to go on a ride. The painting remained in the Coltman family until it was bought by the National Gallery at auction in 1984 for £1,149,600. The NHMF gave £400,000 towards the purchase, which was also supported by the Pilgrim Trust.
6. *River Landscape with Horseman and Peasants* by Cuyp. NG6522. Considered the greatest Cuyp landscape, this painting is recognised as having been a major influence on British Landscape painting, inspiring in particular 18th Century painters such as Constable, who was known to have sketched the painting. This painting remained in the Bute collection when it was bought in 1989 for £8 million, with a grant of £1.5million from the NHMF and with a contribution from the National Art Collection Fund.
7. *Lady with a Squirrel and a Starling* by Holbein the Younger. NG6540. This painting probably dates from Holbein's first visit to England in 1526-8. The identity of the sitter had long remained a mystery. However, it has recently been suggested that the squirrel and starling may allude to the identity of the sitter as Anne Lovell of East Harling, Norfolk. This painting was acquired by the National Gallery in 1993 for £10million, with a £3.5million grant from the NHMF and support from the National Art Collections Fund.

Further information

Sam Goody, NHMF press office, phone: 020 7591 6033.

Highlights of the NHMF are available on B-Roll, including footage of the National Gallery.

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A special exhibition at the British Museum will showcase six treasured museum objects to represent various fields of British heritage supported by the NHMF over the past 25 years