

Fra Angelico's Renaissance masterpiece saved for the UK

07 November 2024

NHMF funding has helped the Ashmolean acquire the 15th-century artwork, The Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist and the Magdalen.

Painted in the 1420s, The Crucifixion is one of Fra Angelico's earliest works and exemplifies the power, beauty and sensitivity for which he would later become known. This unique painting offers extraordinary insight into Fra Angelico's innovative style and the development of European painting more broadly.

Image



Fra Angelico's The Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist and the Magdalen.

A successful campaign

The magnificent work, which has been in the UK for about two centuries, was sold to an overseas buyer and at risk of leaving the country. Due to the work's value and importance, an export license stop was imposed by the UK Government in January 2024.

Thanks to a successful public appeal, the Ashmolean has been able to raise the £4.48million needed to keep the painting in the UK.

Alongside £650,000 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and significant grants from Art Fund and The Headley Trust, contributions from over 50 major donors made the acquisition possible. Lead donors included the Ashmolean's Chairman, The Lord Lupton CBE, and David and Molly Lowell Borthwick.

A rare and worthy addition to the Ashmolean's important collection of Renaissance art

Now the painting will go on free public display for the first time. The piece will hang in the Ashmolean's Italian Renaissance galleries, together with a later hinged triptych by the artist, allowing visitors to appreciate how the artist's style developed over the course of his career.

Image



The triptych, which depicts the Virgin and Child with angels and a Dominican saint flanked by St Peter and St Paul, is one of only a few examples of Fra Angelico's work in a British public collection.

A unique piece

Fra Angelico was a Dominican friar and one of most celebrated artists of the Italian Renaissance. Most of his paintings are large-scale frescoes or monumental altarpieces that remain in situ in the Dominican churches and convents in Italy. This painting, in contrast, is one of the few surviving small-scale works on panel by the artist.

Simon Thurley, Chair of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, said: "Fra Angelico's masterpiece, The Crucifixion, having long been in private ownership, is in uniquely fine condition, and a rare and worthy addition to the Ashmolean's important collection of Renaissance art.

"The National Heritage Memorial Fund exists to create an outstanding collection of the UK's finest heritage as a permanent memorial to those have given their lives for the UK. We are delighted that The Crucifixion is now part of that

incredible publicly accessible collection.”

Explore the collection

Discover the other heritage treasures we've helped preserve in our [project archive](#).

Related News

Future secured for rare medieval carving of the Deposition from the Cross

The unique 12th-century sculpture has been saved for the UK and now joins the V&A's permanent collection thanks in part to NHMF funding.

Renaissance master Peruzzi's 'The Nativity' saved for the UK

Thanks to NHMF funding, the rare artwork becomes the most significant Renaissance painting in a Northern Ireland collection and the artist's only painting publicly available in the UK.

Portrait of Mai saved for the UK following historic fundraising campaign

In part thanks to £10million NHMF funding, The National Portrait Gallery and Art Fund's joint campaign to save Joshua Reynolds' remarkable portrait has been successful.