

'Unparalleled collection' of Ruskin paintings and documents secured for the nation

20 March 2019

Lancaster University and the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) are delighted to announce the purchase of the Whitehouse Ruskin Collection. This purchase has secured for the nation an unparalleled collection of the paintings and drawings, books and manuscripts, photographs and daguerreotypes of John Ruskin (1819–1900), the epoch-defining critic, artist, environmentalist and social thinker.

Image



The Whitehouse Ruskin Collection has been purchased through the generosity of The Education Trust Limited (ETL) and The Whitehouse Trust, along with support from the NHMF, The Art Fund, The Bowland Charitable Trust, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Guild of St George, the Friends of the National Libraries, the Murray Family, The Aldama Foundation, The Pilgrim Trust and the John S Cohen Foundation.

Lancaster University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mark Smith, said: “We are grateful to the NHMF, the ETL and Whitehouse Trust, and our other benefactors. John Ruskin was a visionary, whose thinking is increasingly relevant in the 21st

century, and our ambitious plans will make his work more widely accessible – physically and digitally – locally, nationally and internationally.”

Ros Kerslake, CEO of NHMF, said: “2019 marks 200 years since the birth of John Ruskin and so the acquisition of this important collection is very timely. The Ruskin Museum of the Near Future, is the perfect home for the archive. The museum’s plan to digitise it and share the work and life of Ruskin with more people than ever before is one of the key reasons why we at the NHMF felt compelled to support it.”

Brought together by educationalist and Liberal MP, John Howard Whitehouse, the Whitehouse Ruskin Collection contains thousands of items and provides an unprecedented insight into the life and work of John Ruskin and his circle of highly influential associates, including Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris and John Everett Millais. It is one of the most complete compilations of a single author’s works anywhere in the world.

Charlotte Robins, Head of The Education Trust Limited, said: “On behalf of The Education Trust and The Whitehouse Trust, we are pleased and proud that it has been possible for the stewardship of this comprehensive Ruskin collection to transfer into the care and ownership of Lancaster University, after decades of association with my family. In this way we believe the university will be able to develop and enhance public access to, and engagement with, Ruskin’s legacy. The transaction will allow The Education Trust to continue to focus on Brantwood, Coniston (John Ruskin’s home from 1872 until his death in 1900). We are especially grateful to all who have made this possible, including the National Heritage Memorial Fund and other donors, and for the vision and support of a very important and valuable heritage collection.”

Jacqueline Whiteside, Chair of The Ruskin Foundation, said: “The Ruskin Foundation is absolutely delighted in this bicentenary year that the future of the Whitehouse Ruskin Collection is to be assured in perpetuity by this transfer of title. Trustees are grateful to the NHMF and other funders, and to ETL, for making this possible, and especially to Lancaster University, whom we are confident will both continue to care for the collection and to promote the works and ideas of John Ruskin to an even wider public and academic audience. The foundation has been privileged to have the care of the Collection over the past 20 years, and is proud to have played a part in securing its future.”

Stephen Deuchar, Director of The Art Fund, said: “The Whitehouse Ruskin Collection is an incomparable resource, bearing witness to the impact of Ruskin

and his legacy in shaping our views on art and its wider role within society, still resonating today. We are very proud to have supported this acquisition.”

Highlights from the collection include:

- 29 volumes of Ruskin’s diaries (1835–1888), illustrated with his sketches, of which only selections have been published;
- 7,400 letters, which include correspondence with J.M.W. Turner, Charles Darwin, Thomas Carlyle, Lord Palmerston and Octavia Hill;
- 350 books from Ruskin’s own library, including rare first editions such as Samuel Rogers’s *Italy* (the book that inspired Ruskin’s passion for Turner), William Morris’s *Decorative Arts* and the works of the Romantics, including Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron.
- 1,500 drawings and 500 prints by Ruskin and by his associates including Edward Burne-Jones, John Everett Millais, William Henry Hunt, W.G. Collingwood, Arthur Severn, Susan Beever, Samuel Prout and others.
- 125 Daguerreotypes, including some of the earliest known images of the Alps and of Venice, and hundreds of photographs of historic landscapes, art and architecture, including items from Ruskin’s private collection.

The collection will continue to be housed in Richard MacCormac’s award-winning building at Lancaster University, and on loan at Brantwood, Ruskin’s home at Coniston.

Through this acquisition, Lancaster University will own the collection, which will be central to the University’s relaunch of The Ruskin as a Museum of the Near Future.

Professor Sandra Kemp, Director of The Ruskin, said: “As the pre-eminent art critic and social commentator of the Victorian era, Ruskin transformed the way we think about art. He also had an extraordinary ability to connect the social, the aesthetic and the scientific. Ruskin’s foresighted ideas laid the foundations of the National Trust and inspired social reformers, from Gandhi to the creators of the welfare state to modern environmentalists. The Ruskin – Library, Museum and Research Centre will explore how Ruskin’s ideas and work can unlock the pressing cultural, social and environment issues of today and tomorrow.

“The location of The Ruskin at Lancaster is critical, as it will support academics and students, and wider publics, as we begin to redefine Ruskin’s legacy for a new era. Moving forwards, we aim to work with the Whitehouse Ruskin Collection to deliver a vibrant programme of events and exhibitions that reflect the

importance of Ruskin not only for his time but for ours as well. Our goal is to fuel a new level of engagement and collaboration with other collections and institutions to ensure Ruskin's legacy is available to as many people as possible."

The Ruskin will launch with an ambitious programme of events starting in Lancaster on 25 September 2019 with an exhibition "Ruskin – Museum of the Near Future".

Notes for editors

Lancaster University purchased the Whitehouse Ruskin Collection for £8million. The National Heritage Memorial Fund contributed £2.3m.

The Education Trust Limited and The Whitehouse Trust

The Education Trust Ltd is an exempt charity and a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Prior to the transaction, the charity held a collection of artefacts relating to John Ruskin. Its charitable activities are focussed on education relating to the life and works of John Ruskin. The charity plays an important role in the preservation of Brantwood, John Ruskin's home in the Lake District.

The JH Whitehouse Trust is a charitable will trust that contained Ruskin's diaries and other artefacts donated as part of the transaction.

The Ruskin Foundation

The Ruskin Foundation was founded in 1993, for the advancement of education of both the general public and scholars in the life and works of John Ruskin and associated subjects. Trustees comprise independent members together with members nominated by Education Trust Ltd. (ETL) and Lancaster University. Since 1995, the Foundation has had the legal care of the Whitehouse Ruskin Collection and the Whitehouse Will Trust Collection by means of a Bailment from the owners (ETL), with Lancaster University generously accommodating the works in the HLF-funded and award-winning Ruskin Library.

Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34m to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. It also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by

supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators. Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 151,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions and subscription to Art Quarterly magazine. In addition to grant-giving, Art Fund's support for museums includes Art Fund Museum of the Year (won by Tate St Ives in 2018) and a range of digital platforms.

Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org

Friends of the National Libraries

Founded in 1931, Friends of the National Libraries saves our written and printed heritage through acquisition grants to national and regional archives, libraries and collections.

FNL is the only UK charity focusing solely on supporting acquisitions in this area, it is the equivalent of the Art Fund for rare books, manuscripts and fine bindings.

www.friendsofnationallibraries.org.uk

The Garfield Weston Foundation

The Garfield Weston Foundation is a family-founded, charitable grant-making foundation, which supports a wide range of causes across the UK, donating over £70m annually. It was established in 1958 by the Weston family and is one of the largest and most respected charitable institutions in the UK which has donated over £1billion in total. The Trustees are descendants of the founder and the Weston family continues to take a highly active and hands-on approach.

garfieldweston.org

The Guild of St George

The Guild of St George is an educational charity founded in 1871 by John Ruskin, devoted to the arts, crafts and the rural economy. It owns the Ruskin Collection given by Ruskin to the working people of Sheffield and now cared for and displayed at Museums Sheffield, and a land holding, Ruskin Land, with significant public access, in the Wyre Forest. The Guild also hosts and presents regular events, lectures, collaborations and projects in the UK and internationally, and publishes books and an annual magazine. Its collection is at the heart of Bicentenary exhibitions at Two Temple Place (until 22 April) and Sheffield's

Millennium Gallery (from 29 May). More at www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk.

The Pilgrim Trust

The Pilgrim Trust was founded in 1930 by Edward Stephen Harkness of New York. In 2018 the Trust gave just over £2.5m in grants within its priority areas of Preservation and Scholarship and Social Welfare. www.thepilgrimtrust.org.uk

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