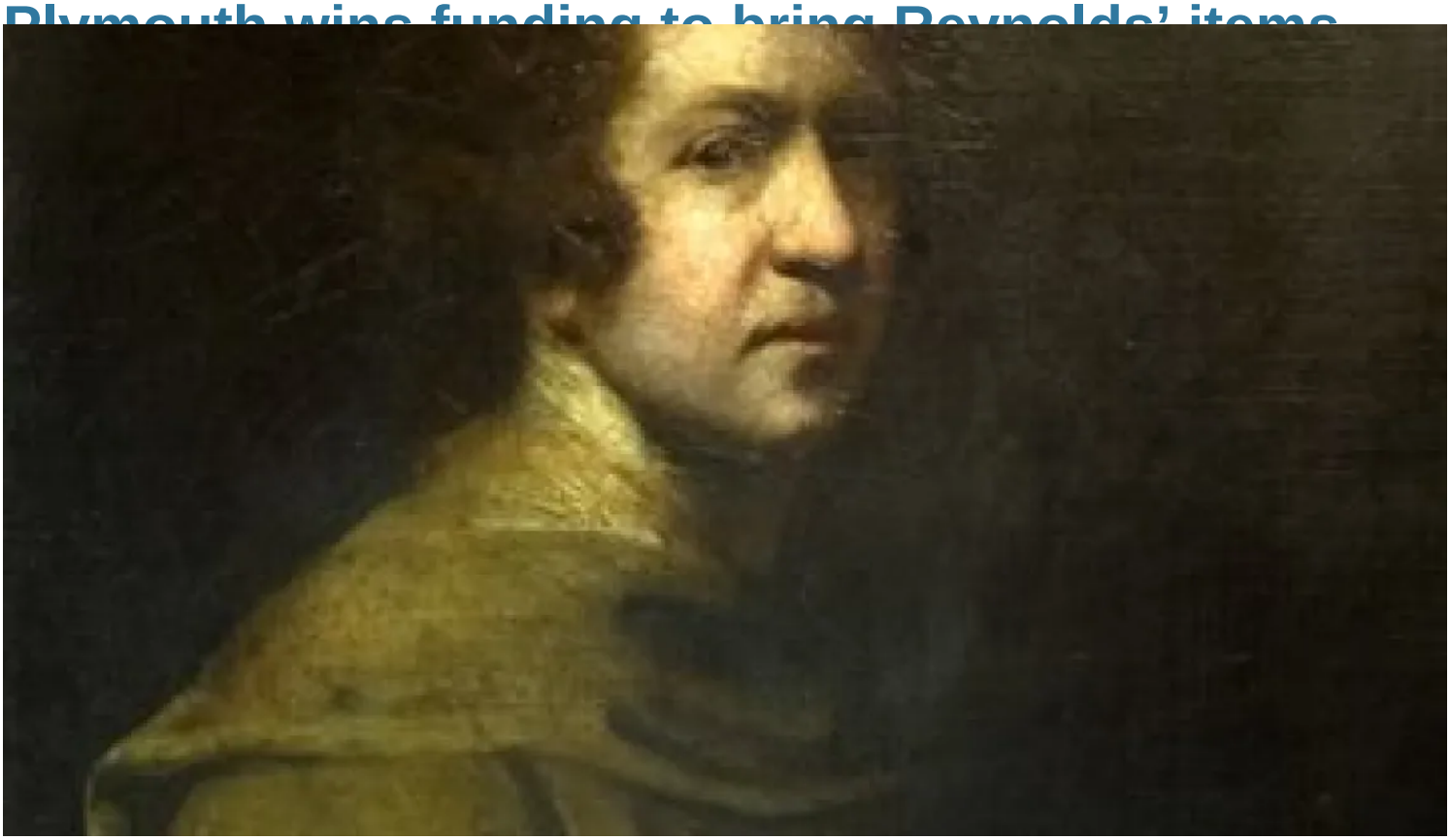
Plymouth wins funding to bring Reynolds' items



Self portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds 1764-5. Copyright Plymouth City Council

Staff at the City Museum and Art Gallery staff are celebrating after successfully securing £326,300 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards the acquisition of a Reynolds' first self-portrait, used by the artist to advertise his Plymouth Dock studio in the mid 1740s. The funding will also help to acquire a fantastic sketchbook compiled on his 'Grand Tour' to Italy from 1750 to 1752.

Reynolds was born in Plympton St. Maurice in 1723 and went on to become one of the most important artists of his generation. He studied in London and then established a studio in Devonport (known at the time as Plymouth Dock) before travelling around Italy studying the Great Masters. On his return to England he became a highly successful artist, the first President of London's Royal Academy and Painter to the King, George III.

"This is an absolutely incredible piece of Plymouth's history returning home and our Museum's staff and the Friends of the Museum should be extremely proud." said Deputy Leader, Councillor Peter Smith.

"Sir Joshua Reynolds is one of Plymouth's most famous historical figures. He created an amazing body of work and campaigned tirelessly throughout his life to raise the standing of the arts in Britain," continues Councillor Smith. "His contribution, paintings and the legacy he left behind are something we can be really proud of. We are so pleased to have been able to secure the funds to prevent these important works from going abroad and to help bring Plymouth a

step closer towards becoming a true centre of excellence for the study of Reynolds and his early career."

The success of this funding bid brings the acquisition a major step closer and all fingers are now crossed for the outcome of a further application to the Purchase Grant Fund at the V&A. £63,000 match funding for the acquisition has been awarded by The Art Fund, while the Friends of Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery are well on the way to raising the final £10,000.

Meanwhile the self-portrait and sketch book can be seen on display in the Cottonian Collection at the City Museum and Art Gallery from now until after Easter. Both items provide a fascinating insight into Reynolds' early career and artistic development and are an excellent complement to early portraits of the artist's father and sister already in the Museum's collection.

Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: "As the foremost portrait painter in 18th-century England, Sir Joshua Reynolds works are true masterpieces and are still known and loved throughout the world. Today's HLF investment helps the Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery move a step closer to securing two significant artefacts that will shed light on the man behind the paintbrush and allow local people and visitors alike to learn about and enjoy Reynolds legacy."

A season of special events will take place in early 2015 in celebration of the pending acquisition as well as to mark the centenary of the historically important Cottonian Collection, which includes other early works by Reynolds.

Notes to editors

Find out more about the artist and his life at the City Museum and Art Gallery website or come along to a special 'History Bite' talk/tour at the Museum and Art Gallery on Wednesday 28 May at 1pm called 'Sir Joshua Reynolds and his Artistic Career'. Admission to the 30-minute talk is free but advance booking is advised via the Museum Welcome Desk or by calling 01752 304774.

Opening hours for the Museum and Art Gallery are 10am to 5.30pm Tuesday to Friday and 10am to 5pm on Saturday.

Further information

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