£1.1m award for Heath Robinson Museum in Pinner

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William Heath Robinson was also an accomplished illustrator and painter, but only a very small proportion of his work is currently on show at West House, in Pinner Memorial Park, and there is little on display elsewhere.

That is now about to change, thanks to a grant of £1.13 million from the HLF. The money will support the West House and Heath Robinson Museum Trust's project to build an extension to West House. This will enable an extensive collection of Heath Robinson's work, currently stored at Harrow Museum, to be exhibited, much of it for the first time.

Martin Verden, Chairman of the West House and Heath Robinson Museum Trust, said: "We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has rewarded the Trustees' 15 years of hard work to turn West House into a community asset. There is a real public hunger to see Heath Robinson's work and learn more about his life. When you see his pictures he makes you chuckle – they are fun, and people come away feeling happy."

William Heath Robinson is an artist of international standing, and his work, whether in his well-known humorous drawings or his illustrations for Kipling, Shakespeare or his own children's stories, is integral to the fabric of British cultural heritage. The museum will be a major attraction for Pinner, where he lived in Moss Lane for many years. Heath Robinson's son-in-law gave the collection of more than 500 original artworks – including cartoons, book illustrations and watercolours – in the hope that it would go on permanent public display.

The project is a joint venture between the William Heath Robinson Trust, which owns the collection, and the people of Pinner who have restored West House, a once-derelict Georgian building, to develop the new museum. The trust hopes that as well as being a focus for local people, the museum will receive visitors from all over the world.

There will be two galleries: one for the permanent exhibition and the other for a changing series of temporary exhibitions – four per year - showing particular aspects of the collection or works by related artists. The Activity Room will allow visitors of all ages to make their own creations and study aspects of the collection; there will also be an archive and a museum shop.

Volunteering will be key to the new museum's success. Training programmes will be organised so that volunteers can acquire skills covering cataloguing, researching, and handling the collection as well as encouraging community engagement and evaluating visitor feedback.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: "Although his name has become synonymous with mechanical complexity or a 'make do and mend' mentality, many people today are unaware of the wry and affectionate humour of Heath Robinson's cartoons. This project will introduce him, and the breadth of his talent, to new audiences while conserving a large collection of his work."

However Verden cautioned: "We still need to raise £200,000 to build the museum. People from all over the world have been very generous in supporting our Kickstarter campaign and appeal, and we hope that more donors will give the project the best possible Christmas present, so that we can reach our target and open at the end of 2015."

Donations can be made at the my donate website.

Notes to editors

The West House and Heath Robinson Museum Trust

The Trust was formed to restore West House and to develop a museum to display the works of William Heath Robinson. Situated in Pinner Memorial Park, West House was once the home of Lord Nelson's grandson. It was purchased by public subscription in 1947 as a war memorial, but fell into disrepair. The West House and Heath Robinson Museum Trust restored and re-opened it in 2010. Now a thriving community facility with function room and café, it houses a Shrine, the Pinner Books of Remembrance and a small Heath Robinson gallery.

Trustees include representatives of the Heath Robinson Trust; Cllrs Jean Lammiman and Keith Ferry of Harrow Council; Navin Shah, member of the London Assembly; and local residents. The trust's vision is that, in addition to being a cultural centre and war memorial, West House will become the national and international centre for the understanding and appreciation of the life and work of William Heath Robinson and a unique centre for the wider study of illustration as an art form. One of the trust's innovative approaches to fundraising has been the recently-concluded Kickstarter campaign, which raised funds to fit out the permanent exhibition of Heath Robinson works. It is believed that this is the first time crowdfunding has been used to help build a museum; contributions have come from as far afield as San Francisco and Singapore.

Patrons of the Trust are:
The Mayor of Harrow
Cllr Lurline Champagnie, Harrow Council
Barry Cryer OBE, writer and comedian
Thomas Heatherwick, designer of the Olympic cauldron
Nick Hurd, MP for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner
Michael Rosen, former Children's Laureate
Desmond Shawe-Taylor, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures
Gareth Thomas, MP for Harrow West

The William Heath Robinson Trust

When Heath Robinson's daughter died her husband wanted her collection of her father's work to be kept in public ownership. As a result the William Heath Robinson Trust was formed in 1992. The collection includes about 500 pieces of original art work together with an archive of letters, association copies and special editions of the books that he illustrated, proof prints, advertising booklets and ephemera. It is the only substantial collection of the artist's work in public ownership.

The national and international importance of the collection is attested to by letters supporting the project from Sir Nicholas Serota, Director of the Tate: Ian Dejardin, Director of Dulwich Picture Gallery; Desmond Shawe-Taylor, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures; Nick Savage, Head of Collections and Library at the Royal Academy of Arts and Margaretta Fredrick, Chief Curator, Delaware Art Museum.

Further information

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