Margam House moves to the museum

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Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales is today celebrating two new art acquisitions - View of Margam House, Glamorgan, looking South & View of Margam House, Glamorgan, looking North - after receiving a generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Art Fund.

The two large panoramic paintings of Margam House, which are now on display for the first time at National Museum Cardiff, were purchased by private treaty sale through Sotheby's for £218,500.

Dating back to the early 18th century, they are the only substantial records of one of the great Tudor houses of Wales, which was owned by the Mansel Family - the most important gentry family in Tudor and Stuart Glamorgan. The estate was converted from the buildings of a Cistercian monastery and demolished a century later.

As well as the architecture of the house and the plan of its elaborate baroque gardens, the paintings record the deer in the park, the nearby village, passing travellers on horse and foot, coastal shipping in the Bristol Channel, all set within a prosperous and well-ordered agricultural landscape.

The landscape has been utterly transformed in the 20th century by the M4 motorway and the Port Talbot steelworks. Consequently the paintings provide an exceptional opportunity to engage with local audiences as Oliver Fairclough, Keeper of Art, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales explains:

"Until now, there were no early 'estate paintings' in the National Museum's collection and we hope that these two will be a very popular and accessible addition, thanks to the support of the HLF and the Art Fund.

"The paintings will be used for both formal and informal learning. In particular, they will be used by schools and community groups in Neath Port Talbot to study the changes that have taken place in the area during the last 300 years. We have also been fortunate to have had the support of Margam Park and its Friends during the acquisition process, and we hope this relationship with the area will continue."

The paintings will be shown in the museum, where there is a major portrait of the builder of the house, Sir Thomas Mansel with his wife Jane, dating from the 1620s. Amgueddfa Cymru is also committed to a programme of events and a tour exhibition of the paintings across Wales.

HLF awarded £142,300 to the museum to secure the paintings and run an associated programme of activities for the public to learn about their significance. Carys Howell, HLF Committee Member for Wales, said: "Margam Park and House is much-loved by local people and visitors alike. The house has a fascinating past and through these paintings visitors will be inspired to find out more about the building's story, see how it looked in the 18th century and imagine what life was like for the people who lived there."

Entry to National Museum Cardiff is free thanks to the support of the Welsh Government.

Amgueddfa Cymru operates seven national museums across Wales. These are National Museum Cardiff, St Fagans:

National History Museum, National Roman Legion Museum, Caerleon, Big Pit: National Coal Museum, Blaenafon, National Wool Museum, Dre-fach Felindre, National Slate Museum, Llanberis and the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea.