Rare Renaissance masterpiece saved for the nation

17/07/2013

The painting, ‘Christ between Saints Paul and Peter’ (dated c.1320) by Sienese artist Pietro Lorenzetti was placed under a temporary export bar by the Culture Secretary due to its high quality.

The purchase was made using £856,000 from the Gallery’s Ferens Endowment Fund with the Heritage Lottery Fund and Art Fund awarding £758,000 and £200,000 respectively to Hull City Council.

The acquisition is particularly important for the Ferens which has utilised the John Bradshaw Bequest to honour the memory of this esteemed former Director of the Ferens Art Gallery (1965-1974) and Curator of Hull City Museums and Art Galleries (1974-1992), who died in 2001.

Painted in tempera with a gold background, the panel probably formed part of a larger altarpiece. A quintessential work by the artist and his only fully autograph work in the UK, it is considered to be of outstanding aesthetic and scholarly importance.

The painting will initially undergo conservation treatment courtesy of the National Gallery, London, as part of its commitment to the support of regional galleries. The conservation will take about a year and will include structural stabilisation, cleaning and restoration, after which it will be displayed permanently at the Ferens Art Gallery in Hull.

On arrival in Hull, the Heritage Lottery Fund grant will enable an extensive public engagement programme around the Lorenzetti which is expected to last a total of 20 months. This will create 3 new freelance roles one of which focuses on working with volunteers to develop a programme of learning activities in Hull, so that people of all ages can learn about the painting and its place in the Ferens collection. An activity programme will include outreach work with multi faith groups, primary and secondary schools, talks and creative workshops for adult learners, gallery trails and project work with Hull School of Art and Design. Digital materials interpreting the painting will be produced including a film of the conservation work and on-line resources.

Dr Caroline Campbell, National Gallery Curator of Italian Paintings before 1500, said: “Pietro Lorenzetti was an artist ahead of his time. He creates a sense of emotional engagement and connection between figures, as in the Ferens picture, which is unparalleled in fourteenth-century Italian art. We are delighted that this painting is going on display in a UK public collection and that the National Gallery has been able to play a role in helping make this happen.”

Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber, said: “This is a fantastic story for Hull and is one of the most significant acquisitions for the Ferens Gallery collections since the 1960s. The work, which is one of the most important examples of early Renaissance art and will now be saved for the nation, is a very special addition both for the Gallery and local community, as well as for putting Hull’s visitor offer firmly on the heritage tourism map.”

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund, said: “This is a very exciting moment not just for the Ferens and for Hull but for the wider British public too. As the only fully autograph work by Lorenzetti in the UK it’s a hugely significant acquisition. Even in the midst of funding pressures and cutbacks, the Ferens and its supporters have pulled off a great coup.”

Hull City Council Portfolio Holder for Culture, Councillor Terry Geraghty, said: “I am tremendously proud that Hull’s Ferens Art Gallery has been able to purchase this rare art work, allowing it to remain in the country. Hull is shortlisted for City of Culture 2017 and a purchase of this rarity and significance helps to highlight the city's existing cultural strengths and serious ambitions to maximise the potential offered through cultural regeneration.

Hull is in a very unusual position due to the Ferens Endowment Fund, established in 1928 by Thomas Robinson Ferens, and dedicated to acquiring new artworks for the Ferens permanent collection. With the generous additional support we have received from our partners the National Gallery, Heritage Lottery Fund and Art Fund we have together secured something very special.

Notes to editors

The Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art, helping museums to buy and show great art. Over the past 5 years we’ve given over £26million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections and placed hundreds of gifts and bequests, from ancient sculpture and treasure hoards to Old Master painting and contemporary commissions. We are independently funded, the majority of our income coming from over 100,000 members who, through the National Art Pass, enjoy free entry to over 220 hundred museums, galleries and historic houses across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions.

The Ferens Art Gallery has one of the most comprehensive regional collections of European art in Britain, spanning the 15th century to the present day. The work by Lorenzetti fills a significant gap in these holdings as there are currently no Italian works of this significance or period. The earliest work at the moment is an English School alabaster relief 'Resurrection' dating to the mid 15th century.

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The Ferens Art Gallery has seen record visitor figures drawn from across the UK and Europe to view the temporary exhibitions, David Hockney (2011), Andy Warhol (2012) and Leonardo da Vinci (2012/13) with 68,0000, 58,000 and 55,000 visitors respectively.

Hull and City of Culture 2017
Hull along with Swansea Bay, Dundee and Leicester has made the final 4 bidding to become UK City of Culture 2017. Hull's bid shows the city to be a contender with real credentials.

The bid ties in with the aims of Hull’s 10-year City Plan, which launched in June 2013, and is being used as a vehicle to help deliver one of the key strands - to regenerate Hull as a world class visitor destination, with a distinctive cultural offer.

With their unique heritage and culture they aim to change the perceptions of the city by telling their untold stories and demonstrating their place in the UK, as a gateway to Europe. For more on their bid visit the Hull City Council website or follow them on Twitter @2017Hull and on Facebook/2017Hull

The National Gallery is one of the greatest art galleries in the world. Founded by Parliament in 1824, the Gallery houses the nation’s collection of Western European paintings from the late thirteenth to the early twentieth century. Almost all of the 2,300 paintings in the National Gallery’s collection are on permanent display. The collection includes works by Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Turner, Rembrandt, Degas, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Renoir, Monet, Rubens,

Velázquez, Van Dyck, Titian and Bellini. The Gallery's key objectives are to enhance the collection, care for the collection and provide the best possible access to visitors. For more information visit the National Gallery website.

Main caption photograph: from left to right: Sarah Philp, Head of Programmes, the Art Fund; Larry Keith, Director of Conservation, the National Gallery; Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund, Yorkshire and the Humber; Mitch Upfold, Head of Sport, Leisure and Heritage, Hull City Council; Kirsten Simister, Curator of Art, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull City Council with the prized Ferens purchase

Further information

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