

# The Courtauld

## Press Release

19 July 2021

### **THE JOHN BROWNE CHARITABLE TRUST DONATES £1M TO COURTAULD CONNECTS**

The Courtauld is delighted to announce that the John Browne Charitable Trust has made a significant donation of £1,000,000 to the transformation of The Courtauld's Somerset House spaces, as part of the Courtauld Connects project.

Courtauld Connects is an ambitious development programme that will make The Courtauld's world-class artworks, research and teaching accessible to even more people. In recognition of this significant gift, the historic entrance to The Courtauld Gallery will be designated The John Browne Entrance Hall.

The elegant setting of the John Browne Entrance Hall was the point of arrival for all attendees of the greatest artistic event of the London Summer Season in the late 18th and early 19th centuries: the Royal Academy's annual Exhibition. It was the place for London high society to see and be seen.

As a result of the Courtauld Connects project, The Courtauld's much-loved collection, which belongs to the Samuel Courtauld Trust and ranges from the Middle Ages to the 20th century – will be completely redisplayed and reinterpreted. Enhanced spaces will allow The Courtauld to give visitors greater insight into its collections, teaching and research and enable inspiring encounters with its great works of art. In addition, two brand new galleries will provide a beautiful new home for The Courtauld's acclaimed programme of temporary exhibitions.

Masterpieces from The Courtauld's world-famous collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art will be reunited in the spectacularly restored LVMH Great Room – London's oldest purpose-built exhibition space and the largest space in Somerset House. The Blavatnik Fine Rooms will provide the stunning setting for a series of new displays of works from the Renaissance to the 18th century.

A new space will be dedicated to The Courtauld's important collection of Medieval and Early Renaissance paintings and decorative arts, and rooms will be devoted to 20th century art and the Bloomsbury Group. A new Project Space will provide a flexible platform for spotlighting smaller temporary projects that give visitors special insights into The Courtauld's collection, conservation and research.

Professor Deborah Swallow, Mārit Rausing Director of The Courtauld, said: "Our renovated welcome spaces will greatly improve the facilities available to our visitors

before they start to explore the rest of the Gallery. We are extremely grateful to the John Browne Charitable Trust for its support, and delighted to be able to name our entrance hall after Lord Browne of Madingley, who has done so much for The Courtauld as our Chairman.”

Lord Browne of Madingley, founder of the John Browne Charitable Trust, added: “The opening of The Courtauld Gallery will be one of the biggest cultural highlights of 2021, and I hope that as many people as possible will experience the beautiful art on display. I am delighted that the John Browne Charitable Trust has been able to make a donation to this transformational project, which will underpin The Courtauld’s continued success in the decades to come.”

The Italian-born Secretary of Foreign Correspondence to the Academy, Giuseppe Marc’Antonio Baretti, described the entrance hall in his *Guide Through The Royal Academy of 1781*:

*The first room of the Royal Academy’s Apartments is a Hall about 25 feet square, which, by having one side open to the Great Stair, from which it is only separated by an airy screen of fluted Dorick Columns, appears more considerable than it really is...[During the Academy’s annual Exhibition] that circular stair...affords a constant moving picture of every gay and brilliant Object which graces the Beau Monde of this vast Capital, pleasantly contrasted with wise Connoisseurs and sprightly Dilettantes of every size and denomination...*

In winter, the Hall was used as a place for new students of the Royal Academy to study and sketch a selection of the best of the institution’s collection of cast sculptures. All students, whether they wished ultimately to focus on painting, sculpture, or architecture, were required first to master the skill of drawing, and in particular the skill of drawing from casts. Students could spend up to a year just drawing the Academy’s collection of casts - only once a sufficient proficiency in this skill was demonstrated would a student finally be allowed to draw life models. Sketches completed by J.M.W. Turner of the Academy cast of the Apollo Belvedere kept in the Hall, completed during his formative teenage years at the Academy Schools, now form part of the Tate collection.

The first stage of Courtauld Connects will be completed in November 2021, with the reopening of The Courtauld Gallery and the Learning Centre, and the construction of the West Wing Conservation Studios. Designed by Stirling Prize-winning architects Witherford Watson Mann, the Gallery redevelopment revitalises and opens up the magnificent buildings conceived by Sir William Chambers in the 1770s, celebrating their fascinating heritage.

**ENDS**

#### **THE COURTAULD**

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About The Courtauld**

The Courtauld works to advance how we see and understand the visual arts, as an internationally-renowned centre for the teaching, research of art history and a major public gallery. Founded by collectors and philanthropists in 1932, the organisation has been at the forefront of the study of art ever since, through advanced research and conservation practice, innovative teaching, the renowned collection and inspiring exhibitions of its gallery, and engaging and accessible activities, education and events.

The Courtauld cares for one of the greatest art collections in the UK, presenting these works to the public at The Courtauld Gallery in central London, as well as through loans and partnerships. The Gallery is most famous for its iconic Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masterpieces – such as Van Gogh's *Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear* and Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*. It showcases these alongside an internationally renowned collection of works from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance through to the present day.

Academically, The Courtauld faculty is the largest community of art historians and conservators in the UK, teaching and carrying out research on subjects from creativity in late Antiquity to contemporary digital artforms - with an increasingly global focus. An independent college of the University of London, The Courtauld offers a range of degree programmes from BA to PhD in the History of Art, curating and the conservation of easel and wall paintings. Its alumni are leaders and innovators in the arts, culture and business worlds, helping to shape the global agenda for the arts and creative industries.

Founded on the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to engage with art, The Courtauld works to increase understanding of the role played by art throughout history, in all societies and across all geographies – as well as being a champion for the importance of art in the present day. This could be through exhibitions offering a chance to look closely at world-famous works; events bringing art history research to new audiences; accessible and expert short courses; digital engagement, innovative school, family and community programmes; or taking a formal qualification. The Courtauld's ambition is to transform access to art history education, by extending the horizons of what this is, and ensuring as many people as possible can benefit from the tools to better understand the visual world around us.

The Courtauld is currently undertaking an ambitious transformation project that will make it accessible to even more people. The Courtauld's home in historic Somerset House – London's working arts centre - is closed for a major programme of renovation. The Courtauld's students

and academic staff are based near King's Cross. The Gallery is scheduled to reopen in November 2021.

**About The John Browne Charitable Trust**

The John Browne Charitable Trust was established 20 years ago by John Browne, Lord Browne of Madingley, to support causes associated with his life as an engineer, businessman, patron of the arts, and son of a Holocaust survivor. It is an established supporter of major educational and cultural causes, including Tate, the Turner Prize, Paintings in Hospitals and the British Museum. Lord Browne is Chairman of the Courtauld Institute of Art and a former Chairman of Tate.  
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