

The Courtauld

Press Release

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PROFESSOR DEBORAH SWALLOW TO STEP DOWN AS MÄRIT RAUSING DIRECTOR OF THE COURTAULD



Professor Deborah Swallow has announced plans to retire from her post as Märit Rausing Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art after leading the internationally renowned institution for 18 years.

In this time, The Courtauld has grown as the world's foremost academic centre for art history, curation, and the conservation of painting, and its Gallery has flourished. Deborah has shown a deeply-felt commitment to widening participation in higher education and art history and The Courtauld has sought to 'open' its offer. She has overseen a significant, ongoing expansion of its faculty, research, and curricula, with new appointments in important fields including the arts of Iran and Islam, China, the Buddhist world, and Black art histories.

Professor Swallow has spearheaded the most significant development in The Courtauld's history, the landmark *Courtauld Connects* project, which is successfully transforming The Courtauld's home at Somerset House, making its world-class collections and scholarship accessible to more people than ever before. The Courtauld Gallery reopened to international acclaim in November 2021, despite the challenges of COVID. Phase 1 of this development programme will be complete in summer 2022 with the move of the Conservation Department back to Somerset

House. The rest of the project is on target to be fully completed in 2025 when all The Courtauld's teaching and research operations will return from its temporary campus at Vernon Square, King's Cross.

Alongside the physical transformation of the buildings, The Courtauld has undertaken an innovative programme of activity to ensure that everyone has the chance to engage with and enjoy art, with national and international loans of artworks, innovative digital events, school and community outreach work, and creative volunteer programmes.

Lord Browne of Madingley, Chair of The Courtauld's Governing Board, said: "During her time as Director, Deborah has worked tirelessly to realise Samuel Courtauld's founding vision of 'art for all'.

Leading The Courtauld through challenging times as well as prosperous ones, she spearheaded the most significant initiative in the institution's history: *Courtauld Connects*. This major capital works project has already begun to transform our iconic home at Somerset House, and the associated programmatic initiatives are allowing wider audiences to engage with our scholarship and collections through tours and outreach activities. This monumental achievement is testament to Deborah's unwavering belief in the power of art, its centrality to the human condition and the importance of preserving it for the future.

Deborah has ensured that the reputation of the Gallery has continued to grow, nationally and internationally, and she has consolidated The Courtauld's reputation as the world's foremost academic centre for art history, curation, and the conservation of painting. Under her leadership academic excellence has continued to flourish, and earlier this year she secured a landmark 10-year strategic relationship with King's College, London.

On behalf of the Board, I thank her most sincerely for all she has done for The Courtauld and for the generations to come who will discover its treasures anew."

Throughout her time at The Courtauld, Professor Swallow has sought to expand The Courtauld's work and reach through important relationships. Of these, the most significant have been those with the Getty; with the State Hermitage Museum (The Courtauld managed the Hermitage Rooms for five years); with the Mehrangarh Museum Trust in Jodhpur Rajasthan; and, as recently announced, with King's College London. This new relationship will allow cooperation between the two institutions across existing areas of synergy in cultural history, visual arts, conservation and digital humanities, and the development of innovative teaching, research and public engagement."

Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair, Arts Council England, said: "Under the leadership of Deborah Swallow the face of The Courtauld, as always an outstanding centre of scholarship, has been transformed through improvements to the Gallery and a programme of collaborations with museums across the UK. 'Courtauld Connects' has given the academic institution a wider public purpose, while the recent announcement of a collaboration between the Courtauld and King's will extend the reach of art history into the broader field of the humanities. Deborah has given The Courtauld a new place in London, the UK and the international community."

Professor Evelyn Welch, Senior Vice President, King's College London, said: "It has been a privilege to work with Deborah Swallow who has led The Courtauld for almost two decades. She has ensured that The Courtauld, its conservation unit and collection have been able to work together to achieve remarkable academic and curatorial successes. Deborah has done a wonderful job extending The Courtauld's expertise to cover a truly global approach to the History of Art. She has been a great supporter of the University of London and the architect of the long-term strategic relationship between the The Courtauld and King's College London. We have all benefited greatly from her wisdom and wish her the very best for her retirement."

Kaywin Feldman, Director of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, said: "Professor Swallow's leadership at The Courtauld has been transformative. She arrived in 2004 with an exciting vision to move the institution from its Euro-centric focus to a global institution, rooted in traditions of excellence. With her signature graciousness and inclusivity, Deborah expanded The Courtauld's donor base and network of scholars and supporters to ensure the institution's relevance and sustainability. As a Courtauld alumna, it has been a joy to watch the institution expand its service to scholars, artists, and the public during Deborah's tenure."

Professor Swallow said: "It has been a huge honour to serve The Courtauld as the Märit Rausing Director and to play a part in shaping this unique organisation's development. I have been challenged, inspired and energised by my Courtauld colleagues, by our students and alumni and by colleagues across the university. I am immensely grateful for the unstinting support given by Lord Browne, Chair of our Governing Board, and his predecessors, Nicholas Ferguson and James Hughes-Hallett, by the full Board, those who have served on our committees and by our many very generous supporters, without whom we could not have achieved our successes to date."

The Courtauld's Governing Board will undertake an international search for the new Director and Professor Swallow will continue to lead The Courtauld until the selected successful candidate is in place. She will remain active as an academic and museum professional - focusing on her area of expertise, the arts of the South Asian subcontinent - both through her work as an individual scholar and through her engagement with organisations in India and the UK.

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THE COURTAULD

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Deborah Swallow

Deborah Swallow took her MA in English literature at New Hall (Murray Edwards College), Cambridge. A year teaching in India gave her a deep interest in the arts, culture and religion of the Subcontinent. Returning to Cambridge, she took a PhD in social anthropology at Darwin College, based on further fieldwork in Orissa. Teaching and curatorial posts in anthropology followed at the University of Cambridge, until in 1983 she joined the Victoria and Albert Museum's Indian department. There she oversaw the creation of the Nehru Gallery of Art and a series of major exhibitions on the arts of the Subcontinent, before becoming Keeper of a newly formed Asian Department and Director of Collections in 2001. She joined The Courtauld as Märit Rausing Director in 2004.

As educator and scholar Professor Swallow continues to be active as a speaker, lecturer, specialist advisor and contributor to journals. She is a Fellow of King's College London, a Trustee of Asia House, Trustee of the Royal Asiatic Society, Trustee of the Helen Hamlyn Trust, Executive Trustee of the Nehru Trust for the Indian Collections at the V&A, and a former Trustee of Art Fund. She has written and spoken on contemporary art, women in leadership, women collectors and 19th-century colonial art. Her specific research focus is on Indian art from around 1850 to the present with particular interests in Indian textile history and the history of heritage and museums in colonial and post-colonial India.

At The Courtauld, she has continued to supervise PhD students, is Chair of The Courtauld's Academic Board, overseeing all academic activity, and she is a regular contributor to The Courtauld's public engagement activities through the Research Forum. She maintains an active presence within student life and engages with alumni of all generations worldwide.

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 art forms – 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.

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