

The Courtauld

Press Release

Wednesday 8 March 2023

CLAUDETTE JOHNSON PIONEERING FIGURATIVE ARTIST TO HAVE MAJOR EXHIBITION AT THE COURTAULD IN SEPTEMBER

**2023 Programme also includes display of remarkable forgeries
from The Courtauld's collection**

Press images: <https://bit.ly/3F5Sw9q>

A major exhibition of work by British artist Claudette Johnson (born 1959) will open at The Courtauld Gallery on 29 September 2023.

A founding member of the Black British Art Movement, Claudette Johnson is considered one of the most significant figurative artists of her generation. For over 30 years she has created powerful and profound large-scale drawings of Black sitters who command attention. Featuring significant early works alongside recent and new drawings, this exhibition will offer a compelling overview of Johnson's pioneering career and artistic development.

The 2023 programme of temporary exhibitions at The Courtauld Gallery will also include a display of forgeries from The Courtauld's collection, uncovering the stories behind their creation and the discovery of their deception; an exhibition of outstanding Venetian drawings from the 18th century; and an exhibition of works from the Arts Council Collection and The Courtauld's collection curated by students in The Courtauld's MA in Curating the Art Museum.

**Claudette Johnson
29 September 2023 – 14 January 2024
Denise Coates Exhibition Galleries**

One of the most significant figurative artists of her generation, Claudette Johnson creates larger-than-life drawings of Black women and men that are at once intimate and powerful. For over 30 years she has consistently pushed herself to create the most authentic renderings of her sitters, addressing both Black bodies and interior lives and lending them a profound sense of presence.

Working in a variety of media, ranging from monochrome works in dark pastel to vast sheets brightly coloured in vibrant gouache and watercolour, combined with a dramatic use of pose, gaze, and scale, her distinctive drawings of friends, relatives, and often herself seek, as the artist puts it, "to tell a different story about our presence in this country".

Johnson came to prominence in the 1980s as an art student in Wolverhampton, starting her career as part of the newly formed BLK Art Group, an association of young Black artists raising questions about the role of Black artists within the British art establishment. Johnson was a pioneer of Black British feminism in the visual arts. She delivered a formative presentation at the First National Black Arts Conference in 1982, at what was then Wolverhampton Polytechnic, in which she actively questioned the role and place of Black women artists in the emerging movement. In the 1980s, she showed her work in numerous era-defining exhibitions, including *Five Black Women*, Africa Centre, London (1983); *Black Women Time Now*, Battersea Arts Centre, London (1984); and *The Thin Black Line*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1985).

Presenting a carefully selected group of major works from across her career, from key early drawings such as the arresting *Untitled (Woman with Earring)*, 1982, which first established her name, alongside brand-new works, the exhibition will consider how Johnson has directed her approach to representing her subjects over three decades. It will also consider how her practice is rooted in the art of the past, with The Courtauld's collection providing a rich context in which to see her work.

The exhibition is the first monographic show of Johnson's work at a major public gallery in London and is rooted in the ongoing research, teaching and activities in the field of Black and Diasporic British Art by Dorothy Price, Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art and Critical Race Art History at The Courtauld. The exhibition will be accompanied by a new catalogue based on original research and conversations with the artist.

MA in Curating the Art Museum

15 June – 3 September 2023

Denise Coates Exhibition Galleries – Gallery 1

An exhibition of works drawn from the Arts Council Collection and The Courtauld's collection, curated by MA Curating the Art Museum students at The Courtauld. Included with Gallery Entry.

Permanent Collection Display

15 June – 3 September 2023

Denise Coates Exhibition Galleries – Gallery 2

A selection of lesser-known works from The Courtauld's world-renowned collection of Post-Impressionist art will go on display in the Denise Coates Exhibition Galleries this summer, supplementing the masterpieces in the LVMH Great Room next door. Visitors will discover paintings by Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard and Henri Rousseau. Included with Gallery Entry.

Art and Artifice: Fakes from the Collection

17 June – 8 October 2023

Gilbert and Ildiko Butler Drawings Gallery and Project Space

This display will showcase drawings, paintings, sculpture and decorative arts that are not what they seem. It will present remarkable forgeries from The Courtauld's collection and tell the stories behind their making and the discovery of their deception. Some known forgeries were given to The Courtauld to help students learn from them. Other works were the pride of the collectors who donated them to the Gallery, only to be later revealed as fakes through close looking, technical examination or research into their history.

Fakes in art are nothing new; forgeries of drawings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder began appearing shortly after his death in 1569, one of which is included in the display. Another striking forgery is a *Virgin and Child*, once thought to be a masterpiece by Botticelli, but unmasked as a fake by the Virgin's resemblance to a 1930s film star. The forgers themselves have become figures of notoriety; a Courtauld professor returned from service in the Second World War with a painting by Han van Meegeren, who went on trial for selling fake Vermeers to the Nazi elite. Also included is a drawing by the infamous British forger Eric Hebborn, who boasted that only a small number of his fakes have been uncovered. Included with Gallery Entry.

La Serenissima: Drawing in 18th century Venice

14 October 2023 – 11 February 2024

Gilbert and Ildiko Butler Drawings Gallery

This display will present an outstanding group of around twenty Venetian drawings from The Courtauld's collection. They evoke the energy and creativity of Venice at a time when the city flourished as one of the great cultural capitals of Europe.

At the dawn of the 18th century, Venice was a magnet for visitors from across Europe, drawn by its architecture, history, and cosmopolitan atmosphere. Many of the artists featured in this exhibition produced works for an international clientele, who avidly collected images of the city, its inhabitants, and its colourful traditions. Landmarks such as St Mark's Square and the Grand Canal set the stage for Canaletto's celebrated views of the city's lively streets and waterways. Piazzetta's evocative head studies and Giambattista Tiepolo's playful caricatures depict an early modern metropolis populated by a myriad of characters of different social backgrounds, while Guardi's panoramic *Feast of Ascension Day* records the formal splendour and ceremony of the city known as La Serenissima – the most serene. Included with Gallery Entry.

The programme of displays in the Gilbert and Ildiko Butler Drawings Gallery is generously supported by the International Music and Art Foundation, with additional support from James Bartos.

Drawing on Arabian Nights

Until 3 June 2023

Project Space

Presented in the Project Space, this display showcases fifteen works from The Courtauld's Prints and Drawings collection, including works by Édouard Manet and John Frederick Lewis, some shown for the first time. For almost three centuries, viewers saw Orientalist paintings and drawings as records of travel in the age of European empires. This display invites visitors to consider an alternative reading of these artworks, as confluences of observed details and literary fictions, in particular the famous *Arabian Nights*, a work that was ubiquitous in nineteenth-century Europe. The display includes also a work by the British-Syrian translator and poet Yasmine Seale. Included with Gallery Entry.

Morgan Stanley Lates at Somerset House with The Courtauld

19 April, 21 June. Further dates to be announced.

Site Wide

Morgan Stanley Lates is a series of evening events celebrating and exploring the best of The Courtauld and Somerset House's cultural programmes.

Occurring just three times a year- in spring, summer and autumn – Morgan Stanley Lates are themed around current exhibitions, and doors around the spectacular central courtyard at Somerset House will be thrown open for after-hours access, exclusive experiences and activities hosted by artists and curators, as well as drinks, food and music.

After-hours exhibition entry to both The Courtauld and Somerset House is free to under 25s.

More details to be announced soon.

Tickets for *Claudette Johnson* go on sale this summer. Sign up to The Courtauld Gallery newsletter to find out about our latest announcements, exhibitions, events and more.
courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/stay-in-touch/

Friends get free unlimited entry to The Courtauld Gallery and exhibitions including *Claudette Johnson*, access to presale tickets, priority booking to selected events, discounts, exclusive events, advance notice of art history short courses and more. Become a Friend at courtauld.ac.uk/friends

The Courtauld Gallery
Somerset House, Strand
London WC2R 0RN

Opening hours: 10.00 – 18.00 (last entry 17.15)

Weekday tickets from £9; Weekend tickets from £11

Friends and Under-18s go free. Other concessions available

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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 and 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 an exempt charity and relies on generous philanthropic support to achieve its mission of advancing the understanding of the visual arts of the past and present across the world through advanced research, innovative teaching, inspiring exhibitions, programmes and collections.

The collection cared for by The Courtauld Gallery is owned by the Samuel Courtauld Trust.