

The Courtauld

Press Release
4 April 2023

FORGERIES FROM THE COURTAULD COLLECTION TO GO ON DISPLAY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN NEW EXHIBITION

Art and Artifice: Fakes from the Collection
The Courtauld Gallery
17 June – 8 October 2023

High-resolution images: <https://bit.ly/3lX7qAX>

Remarkable forgeries originally thought to be masterpieces by artists including Sandro Botticelli, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, John Constable and Auguste Rodin will go on display at The Courtauld this summer, as part of a new display of fakes from its collection.

Featuring around 25 drawings and 7 paintings, as well as sculpture and decorative art, from The Courtauld's collection—many on public view for the first time—the display will tell the fascinating stories behind the creation of these works and the discovery of their deception.

Some known forgeries were given to The Courtauld, the first institution in the UK to teach art history and conservation, to help its 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.

For example, the authenticity of a seascape allegedly painted by John Constable, which came to The Courtauld from the artist's family, remained unquestioned until Courtauld experts discovered a watermark in the paper reading "184-", indicating that it dated from the 1840s and therefore after the artist's death in 1837.

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 1920s film star and the detection of modern pigments.

Fakes in art are nothing new: forgeries of drawings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder began appearing shortly after his death in 1569, in response to demand for his work. The display includes an elaborate example by Bruegel's enterprising younger contemporary Jacob Savery.

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 famously went on trial for selling fake Vermeers to the Nazi elite. The infamous British forger Eric Hebborn is also represented, with a drawing he boasted about twice in his memoir. He further claimed that hundreds of his fakes in the style of masters such as Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck remain to be uncovered.

The display will take place in the Gilbert and Ildiko Butler Drawings Gallery and the Project Space, and run from 17 June to 8 October 2023. 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.

Included with Gallery Entry.

courtauld.ac.uk/whats-on/art-and-artifice-fakes-from-the-collection/

Friends get free unlimited entry to The Courtauld Gallery and exhibitions including *The Morgan Stanley Exhibition: Peter Doig*, 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

MEDIA CONTACTS

The Courtauld

www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/press

media@courtauld.ac.uk

Bolton & Quinn

Erica Bolton | erica@boltonquinn.com | +44 (0)20 7221 5000

Daisy Taylor | daisy@boltonquinn.com | +44 (0)20 7221 5000

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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.