

COURTAULD GALLERY

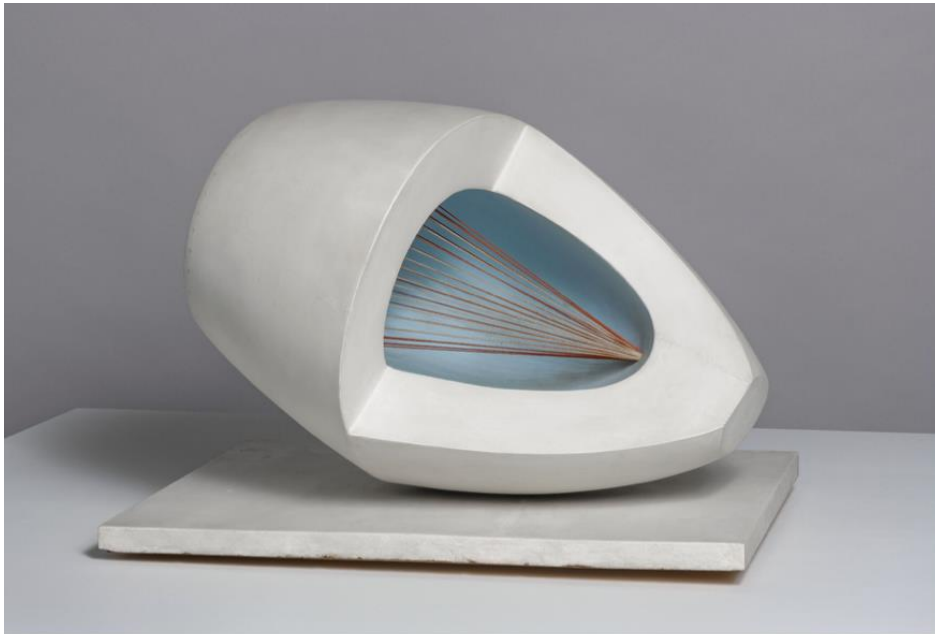
Press release
11 June 2026

THE COURTAULD GALLERY UNVEILS FIRST EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO BARBARA HEPWORTH'S WORK WITH COLOUR

- Uniting for the first time Barbara Hepworth's radical painted sculptures from the 1940s
- On view in a London gallery for the first time since it was acquired for the nation last year following major £3.8 million fundraising appeal – *Sculpture with Colour (Oval Form), Pale Blue and Red (1943)* – a breakthrough sculpture in Hepworth's career and recognised as a masterpiece of British abstract modernism.

The Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen Exhibition: Hepworth in Colour
12 June – 6 September 2026

Press images: <https://tinyurl.com/4mwkr53n>



Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975), *Sculpture with Colour (Oval Form) Pale Blue and Red*, 1943, Wood, paint and strings on a painted wooden base. Wakefield Permanent Art Collection (The Hepworth Wakefield), Barbara Hepworth © Bowness, Image © The Hepworth Wakefield. Photo: Mark Heathcote.

The Courtauld Gallery presents the first exhibition devoted to Barbara Hepworth's lifelong fascination with colour, shedding light on an unexpected and unexplored aspect of the work of one of the most celebrated British artists of the 20th century.

Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975) is best known for her abstract sculptures inspired by nature and the rugged seaside landscapes of Cornwall, where she lived and worked from 1939. Hepworth's practice is often characterised in terms of her commitment to direct carving and 'truth to

materials'. Little attention has been given to the importance of colour in her work. Discussing her innovative use of colour in 1970, she said: "my colour has been accepted, but never understood."

Bringing together 18 sculptures and 26 drawings and paintings, *The Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen Exhibition: Hepworth in Colour* will be the first exhibition to focus on this important but often overlooked aspect of Hepworth's work.

Hepworth's early interest in painted colour dates to the mid-1930s when she and her future husband, Ben Nicholson, formed part of the European avant-garde. In 1939, just before outbreak of the Second World War, she left London for Cornwall with her three young children, taking with her a single sculpture – her very first study for a sculpture with colour. Over the following years, the landscape of Cornwall inspired Hepworth to develop this initial experiment, moving her work in new directions and establishing a lifelong fascination with colour. At the heart of the exhibition will be the remarkable group of painted sculptures made between 1940 and 1948. Hepworth later recalled how, "I used colour and strings in many of the carvings of this time. The colour in the concavities plunged me into the depths of water, caves or shallows...". These early works include the boldly painted stone carvings *Eidos* (1947-8) from the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia and *Sculpture with Colour (Eos)* (1946) from a private collection in Hong Kong. They are exhibited together in the UK for the first time since 1954.

A major highlight of the exhibition will be the painted wood carving, *Sculpture with Colour (Oval Form), Pale Blue and Red*, of 1943, which was acquired by The Hepworth Wakefield in 2025 following the successful national fundraising campaign in collaboration with Art Fund to raise £3.8 million. *Sculpture with Colour (Oval Form), Pale Blue and Red* marked a breakthrough moment in Hepworth's career, combining strings and colour and, for the first time, the beautiful pale blue, which she associated with the Cornish skies and coast. In private hands since it was created, and rarely exhibited, this will be the first time the sculpture is displayed in London since it was acquired for the nation. For Hepworth, the strings in her early sculptures "were the tension I felt between myself and the sea, the wind or the hill".

Other iconic painted stringed sculptures in the exhibition include *Wave*, 1943-44, from the National Galleries of Scotland and *Pelagos* ('sea' in Greek), 1946 from Tate, the latter directly inspired by the sculptor's view from her studio onto the bay in St Ives in Cornwall. The exhibition also unites for the first time from private and public collections the six versions of *Sculpture with Colour (Deep Blue and Red)*, made between 1940 and 1943, featuring contrasting red strings hovering over a striking blue interior.

Alongside sculptures, the exhibition features a rich selection of Hepworth's drawings with colour. During the first years of the war Hepworth lacked the materials, studio space and time to produce much sculpture but her drawings allowed her to continue to explore and develop her ideas. She recalled, "In the late evenings, and during the night I did innumerable drawings...exploring the particular tensions and relationships of form and colour which were to occupy me in sculpture during the later years of the war." These drawings, usually entitled "drawing for sculpture" are remarkable for their intricate crystalline forms, punctuated with strong blues, reds and greens.

The exhibition extends into the 1950s and 1960s to reflect how colour continued to occupy Hepworth in new and innovative ways, including in her expressive paintings, and in her work with patinated bronze and coloured marble.

The Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen Exhibition: Hepworth in Colour is curated by Dr Alexandra Gerstein, Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Courtauld Gallery and Dr Stephen Feeke, independent writer and curator whose PhD from the Courtauld Institute of Art focused on Barbara Hepworth's bronze sculptures.

To coincide with the exhibition, a display of rare photographs, taken in the 1930s by Paul Laib (1932–1936), capturing Hepworth and Ben Nicholson (1894–1982) in their shared studio in Hampstead, London, will be presented in the Project Space. These are among the most evocative studio images to emerge in Britain during the 20th century and show the fascinating interrelation of their practices at this time.

The Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen Exhibition: Hepworth in Colour is accompanied by a new catalogue, edited by Dr Alexandra Gerstein, Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Courtauld Gallery and Dr Stephen Feeke, independent art historian and Hepworth specialist, with contributions by Alexandra Gerstein, Stephen Feeke, David Batchelor, Eleanor Clayton, Kirstie Dootson and Kate Edmondson.

The exhibition's Title Sponsor is Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen LLP. The exhibition's Lead Supporter is the Huo Family Foundation, with Support from Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne.

Courtauld Members can enjoy the exhibition without the crowds at a preview on Thursday 11 June, 14:00 – 18:00, and also get free unlimited entry to all exhibitions, access to presale tickets, priority booking to selected events, advance notice of art history short courses, exclusive events, discounts and more. [Join at courtauld.ac.uk/members](https://courtauld.ac.uk/members)

Late openings

Discover *The Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen Exhibition: Hepworth in Colour* after hours. The Gallery will open until 20:00 on Friday 12 June, 26 June, 31 July, and 4 September 2026.

Relaxed openings

Join us for relaxed openings of *The Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen Exhibition: Hepworth in Colour* on Wednesday 1 July and Wednesday 19 August, at 10:00 or 10:15. Our relaxed exhibition openings include additional support and facilities from our friendly team.

The Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen Exhibition: Hepworth in Colour

12 June – 6 September 2026

Denise Coates Exhibition Galleries, Floor 3

<https://courtauld.ac.uk/whats-on/exh-hepworth-in-colour/>

Hepworth and Nicholson: The Hampstead Studio Photographs

6 June – 4 October 2026

Project Space, Floor 2

<https://courtauld.ac.uk/exh/hepworth-and-nicholson-the-hampstead-studio-photographs/>

Courtauld Gallery, Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 0RN

Opening hours: 10:00 – 18:00 (last entry 17:15).

Temporary Exhibition tickets (including entry to our Permanent Collection and displays) from £18. Courtauld Members and 18s and under 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 Gallery 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 Institute is the largest community of art historians and conservators in the UK, teaching and conducting research on subjects ranging 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, art and business 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 of art throughout history, across all societies and geographies, and to champion its importance 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 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, ensuring as many people as possible can benefit from the tools it offers 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.

About Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen LLP

Joseph Hage Aaronson & Bremen LLP (JHAB) is an elite dispute resolution and advisory law firm based in London. Established by barristers Joe Hage and Graham Aaronson KC in 2013, the firm uniquely integrates the expertise of leading solicitors and barristers, as well as specialist accountants and data scientists, to provide comprehensive solutions to complex legal challenges. We have an international client base that ranges from ultra-high net worth individuals and trusts to publicly listed blue-chip companies, foreign government entities and the world's largest funds.

About Huo Family Foundation

The Huo Family Foundation is a grant-giving foundation based in London. Its mission is to support education, communities and the pursuit of knowledge. Its current areas of focus are education; the arts; and science. Through its donations, the Foundation hopes to improve the prospects of individuals, and to support the work of organisations seeking to ensure a safe and successful future for all society. The Foundation aims to make art more accessible to all through its support for galleries, museums and centres for the performing arts. For more information, huofamilyfoundation.org