

THE
NATIONAL
GALLERY
COLLECTION
PRESS PACK



INTRODUCTION

THE NATIONAL GALLERY HOUSES ONE OF THE GREATEST COLLECTIONS OF EUROPEAN PAINTINGS IN THE WORLD.

The permanent collection consists of over 2,300 paintings from the Middle Ages to the early 20th century. All major traditions of Western European painting are represented, from the painters of late medieval and Renaissance Italy to the French Impressionists, with artists including Titian, Monet, Velázquez, Rembrandt and Van Gogh.

Unlike other major international galleries, the National Gallery was founded on a gift, not from a royal collection. In 1823 the landscape painter and art collector, Sir George Beaumont, promised his collection of pictures to the nation, but the first pictures in the National Gallery came from the banker and collector John Julius Angerstein. In 1824 the House of Commons purchased the Angerstein paintings, which included works by Claude, Rembrandt and Van Dyck. The founders wanted a gallery that would teach and inspire young artists, and be accessible to all. Today, the National Gallery continues to honour its original aims: to preserve and care for the national collection of paintings for future generations and to keep the collection free for the public to visit.

The Gallery's central London location was chosen so that it was convenient for visitors from both the west and the east of the capital. Over 4 million people visit the Gallery per year, including visitors from around the UK and the world as well as Londoners. Once at the Gallery, visitors can choose from a range of events and activities including temporary exhibitions, workshops, talks, lectures and late opening on Fridays.

The National Gallery is constantly changing. Its collection expands as new works are acquired, loaned or bequeathed to the nation. The Gallery also keeps pace with the changing needs of both the collection and its visitors. Paintings require scientific and conservational care, just as visitors need spaces for orientation, relaxation and refreshment.

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

13th to 15th century

Duccio, Uccello, van Eyck, Lippi, Mantegna, Botticelli, Dürer, Memling, Bellini

Most surviving late medieval pictures are religious, made for altars in churches or for private devotion. Many have exquisitely decorated gold-leaf backgrounds. In the 15th century, portraits and scenes from ancient history and mythology increased in importance. Realism also affected the treatment of sacred subjects. Figures were often placed in convincing architectural and landscape settings. Technical advances, such as oil paint, allowed greater subtlety in depicting facial expression and surface textures.

16th century

Leonardo, Cranach, Michelangelo, Raphael, Holbein, Bruegel, Bronzino, Titian, Veronese

The leading artists of this period achieved a fame that has never diminished. Particularly in Italy, Renaissance painters sought to rival and surpass the artists of ancient Greece and Rome. Portraitists were highly prized and pictures of ancient history and mythology became almost as important as Christian subjects. Paintings were appreciated for their artistry as much as for their subject matter, and often placed in specially created galleries.

17th century

Caravaggio, Rubens, Poussin, Van Dyck, Velázquez, Claude, Rembrandt, Cuyp, Vermeer

While some artists of this period looked to the art of the past for inspiration, they always imparted their own style, from the flamboyant to the austere. Religious subjects were treated in novel ways to engage the emotions of the viewer. In the Netherlands, specialist painters of still lifes, landscapes and scenes of everyday life – from elegant social gatherings to lively scenes in taverns – enjoyed great popularity.

18th to early 20th century

Canaletto, Goya, Turner, Constable, Ingres, Degas, Cézanne, Monet, Van Gogh

Although the production of grand paintings for churches and palaces continued, it became more common for artists to paint smaller works that were exhibited and sold through art dealers and public exhibitions. In the 19th century, art movements (loose associations of artists working in a similar style) emerged, as did the idea of the independent artist who rebelled against the official art establishment.

BRIEF COLLECTION HISTORY

1824 The first paintings in the National Gallery collection come from the banker and collector John Julius Angerstein. On 2 April the House of Commons votes £60,000 for the purchase of 38 pictures. They consist of Italian works, including a large altarpiece by Sebastiano del Piombo, *The Raising of Lazarus*, and fine examples of the Dutch, Flemish and English Schools.

1826 In 1823 the landscape painter and art collector, Sir George Beaumont (1753–1827), promised his collection of pictures to the nation, on the condition that suitable accommodation could be provided for their display and conservation.

The gift of the pictures is made in 1826. They go on display alongside Angerstein's pictures in Pall Mall until the whole collection is moved to Trafalgar Square in 1838. The Beaumont Collection includes Rembrandt's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, Rubens's *A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning*, Canaletto's *The Stonemason's Yard*, David Wilkie's *Blind Fiddler* (the latter now in the Tate Collection) and several Claudes. Beaumont so missed his beloved *Landscape with Hagar and the Angel* by Claude that he borrowed it back until his death.

1826 The Government gives funds to purchase Carracci's *Christ appearing to Saint Peter on the Appian Way*, Poussin's *Bacchanalian Revel before a Term*, and Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*.

1831 The Reverend Holwell Carr bequeaths a major collection, including Tintoretto's *Saint George and the Dragon* and Rembrandt's *A Woman Bathing in a Stream*. He stipulates proper accommodation for his pictures. 100 Pall Mall is due to be demolished. The architect Nash's scheme for the development of the Charing Cross area is shelved because of lack of funds.

1837 Constable's *Cornfield* is donated by subscribers.

1838 The collection moves into Wilkins's new building in Trafalgar Square.

1855 Sir Charles Eastlake is appointed first Director in complete charge of the collection and its management, with the help of a Board of Trustees.

The new Director travelled throughout Europe to purchase works for the Gallery. In the 10 years that he was Director, Sir Charles Eastlake ensured that the Gallery's collection of Italian painting expanded and widened in scope to become one of the best in the world. Eastlake's purchases included Botticelli's *Adoration of the Kings* and Uccello's *Battle of San Romano*.

1856 Joseph Mallord William Turner leaves paintings, drawings and watercolours to the National Gallery, including *The Fighting Temeraire*, *The Evening Star* and *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway*.

1871 William Boxall, the next Director, makes a spectacular acquisition of 77 paintings from the Peel collection for £75,000. Consisting of mainly Dutch and Flemish paintings, including Hobbema's *Avenue at Middelharnis* and Rubens's '*Chapeau de Paille*', these added a new dimension to the collection.

- 1897** The National Gallery of British Art (now Tate Britain) opens. A large number of works by British artists had by now entered the National Gallery's collection and most were transferred to Millbank, leaving a selection of British masterpieces in Trafalgar Square.
- 1905** The Art Fund helps save Velázquez's *'The Rokeby Venus'* for the National Gallery by raising £45,000 to outbid other buyers.
- 1910** George Salting Bequest: a large collection of Dutch, Flemish, Netherlandish, Italian and other pictures. It is the largest bequest to date with 192 paintings given to the National Gallery – 164 of these retained.
- 1914–18** During the First World War, the collection is stored in Strand Underground station from 1917.
- 1918** The Lane Bequest provides 33 Impressionist paintings, including Renoir's *The Umbrellas*. The bequest is shared with the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin, Ireland.
- 1924** Samuel Courtauld's gift of £50,000 enables the acquisition of Seurat's *Bathers* and Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*. The Mond Bequest is the Gallery's second largest bequest with 42 paintings, including Raphael's *Crucifixion*.
- 1939–45** Second World War: The collection is stored at Manod quarry in Wales.
- 1962** Leonardo da Vinci's cartoon, *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Saint John the Baptist*, is bought with the help from the Art Fund and public donations. Once purchased by the Gallery, a quarter of a million visitors see it in four months, many making donations.
- 1985/6** John Paul Getty Jnr. (Sir Paul Getty) donates £50 million to the National Gallery.
- 1999** Denis Mahon loan: the distinguished art historian and collector, and former National Gallery trustee, places on long-term loan 28 works from his collection of Italian Baroque paintings. Among them are masterpieces by Guido Reni, Domenichino, Luca Giordano and Johann Liss.
- 2004** Raphael's *Madonna of the Pinks* is bought with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Art Fund (with a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation), the American Friends of the National Gallery, the George Beaumont Group, Sir Christopher Ondaatje and through public appeal.
- 2006** The Simon Sainsbury bequest leaves five paintings to the National Gallery. These include two Monets: *Snow Scene at Argenteuil* and *Water-Lilies, Setting Sun*; and Paul Gauguin's *Bowl of Fruit and Tankard before a Window*.
- 2009** Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* is bought for £50 million in partnership with The National Galleries of Scotland with contributions from the Scottish Government, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, The Monument Trust, The Art Fund and through public appeal.
- The painting will be shared by the National Galleries of Scotland and National Gallery, London and will be displayed for five years at each institution in turn.

ABOUT THE BUILDING



The National Gallery at 100 Pall Mall

1824 The Founding Collection

In April 1824 the House of Commons agreed to pay £60,000 for the picture collection of the banker John Julius Angerstein. His 38 pictures were intended to form the core of a new national collection, for the enjoyment and education of all. On 10 May 1824 the new National Gallery opened to the public free of charge. The pictures were displayed at Angerstein's house at 100 Pall Mall until a dedicated gallery building was constructed.

24,000 visitors attended in the first six months – a tremendous number for that period. William Seguier, who had valued the pictures for the Government, was appointed Keeper.

The size of the building was compared unfavourably with other national art galleries, such as the Louvre in Paris, and ridiculed in the press.

1831 Finding a Site

In 1831 Parliament agreed to construct a building for the National Gallery, designed by William Wilkins, at Trafalgar Square. There had been lengthy discussion about the best location for the Gallery, and Trafalgar Square was eventually chosen as it was considered to be central and accessible.

The National Gallery stands on the former site of the King's Mews. William Wilkins used many of the construction methods of the Mews building when he built the National Gallery.



King's Mews site of the National Gallery

In 1826 the nearby Carlton House, former home of the Prince Regent, had been demolished but its impressive columns were saved. Wilkins selected eight of the columns for use in his new National Gallery building. In the event, he then decided they were too small for the central portico. However, it is conceivable that they were eventually used in the east and west porticos.



Engraving from Wilkins design, The National Gallery – Charing Cross, about 1927

1838 The National Gallery is Opened

The new National Gallery building was finally opened in 1838 by Queen Victoria. The Royal Academy of Arts was also housed in the East Wing of the building. A grand central staircase divided it from the National Gallery in the West Wing.

In 1868, the Royal Academy moved into its own new building in Piccadilly, leaving extra space for the National Gallery.



National Gallery interior, 1876

1876 Expanding the new building

There was a lot of public criticism of the National Gallery's building and in 1868 the architect E.M. Barry was asked to submit designs for rebuilding the entire Gallery at Trafalgar Square.

After much discussion, it was decided that the existing building should remain, but a new wing should be added. This was completed in 1876, and added seven new exhibition rooms at the east end, including the impressive dome.



The completed new galleries, 1910

1896–7 The National Portrait Gallery moves, Tate Gallery opens

The National Portrait Gallery, opened in 1857, found a new home behind the National Gallery in 1890; its new building opened in 1896. The Tate Gallery opened the following year to house the National Gallery's British paintings as well as Sir Henry Tate's own collection.

1911 New additions

The Trustees had to battle for a long time to secure expansion space for the National Gallery. The site in central London was very constrained. Eventually, in 1907, barracks at the rear of the Gallery were cleared and work began to construct five new galleries, which opened to the public in 1911.

1928–1933 Mosaics

The National Gallery commissioned the Russian-born artist Boris Anrep (1883–1969) to lay two mosaic pavements in the vestibule of the Main Vestibule to illustrate 'The Labours of Life' and 'The Pleasures of Life'. In 1952, Anrep laid a third pavement, 'The Modern Virtues'. The resulting mosaics are a celebration of everyday life, which lies underfoot in a busy public place.



Anrep Mosaic



Bomb Damage to National Gallery roof

1939–45 The Second World War

On Wednesday 23 August 1939, the National Gallery closed its doors to the public, not knowing when they would open again.

During the War the entire collection was evacuated to a slate quarry at Manod in Wales, and the Gallery suffered bomb damage in 1940.

Visitors, unable to see old master paintings, were now drawn to popular lunchtime concerts by the famous pianist Myra Hess, and enjoyed a series of temporary exhibitions.



Sainsbury Wing exterior

1975 The Northern Extension

The northern extension opened in 1975, providing considerable extra exhibition space: nine large rooms and three smaller 'cabinet' rooms. These new galleries made use of natural lighting as far as possible.

1991 The Sainsbury Wing

In 1985 Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover and his brothers The Hon. Simon Sainsbury and Sir Timothy Sainsbury generously agreed to finance the construction of a new wing for the Gallery.

A site next to the Gallery had been vacant since the Second World War, when a furniture shop was destroyed by bombing. The new Sainsbury Wing was opened in 1991, and displays the entire early Renaissance collection.

2004–6 Development Of The East Wing

The first stage of this project saw the opening of the Sir Paul Getty Entrance. This made the main building accessible to the public at street level directly from Trafalgar Square for the first time. The second stage involved the redevelopment of the Main Vestibule and restoration of the original 19th-century J. D. Crace ceiling decoration in the Staircase Hall.



Annenberg Court and Lower Hall, East Wing

Present

Following the completion of the Sainsbury Wing, the Gallery has a total floor area of 46,396m² – equivalent to around six football pitches. It is big enough to hold over 2,000 London double-decker buses.



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DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY

Dr Nicholas Penny has been the Director of the National Gallery since 2008.

Nicholas Penny was previously Clore Curator of Renaissance Painting at the National Gallery between 1990 and 2000. He returned to Trafalgar Square from the National Gallery of Art in Washington where he was Andrew W. Mellon Professor at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. He had been Senior Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts from 2002 to 2007.

After obtaining a doctorate from the Courtauld Institute, he began his career as a lecturer in art history at the University of Manchester. His first museum position was that of Keeper of the Department of Western Art at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

Nicholas Penny is the author of many books and articles on both painting and sculpture, and on the history of collecting and taste. His works include scholarly catalogues, introductory texts for the student and critical reviews for the general reader.



RESEARCH AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

About Research

Research is a constant and fundamental activity at the National Gallery, helping to underpin many areas of the Gallery's work including:

- Exhibitions, scholarly catalogues and other publications
- The care and conservation of the pictures
- Their display and interpretation

All of this research contributes to the public understanding of the National Gallery's paintings. This great collection is one of the most closely studied and thoroughly researched in the world.

Researching the paintings

The Gallery has become a pre-eminent centre for the research of European painting from the 13th to the early 20th century. Even so, there are things that remain to be discovered about all the pictures in its collection – even the best known.

The Gallery continues to investigate:

- How, why, when, where and by whom the paintings were made
- Who commissioned and collected them
- How they were used
- What they mean

This in-depth examination of the pictures helps to shape the information available to the public, which is regularly updated to reflect new findings.

Caring for the paintings

The Gallery's Conservation Department works with curators and scientists to ensure that future generations can enjoy the collection. Their work involves regular checks on the condition of paintings, and the control of the light, temperature and humidity in the Gallery. Conservators also carry out major restorations, which can sometimes take many months or even years.

The cleaning and restoration of every picture is approved by the Gallery Trustees. The process is carefully monitored and documented, making extensive use of photography. Restoring the painted surface may be the most visible work of conservators, but the treatment of the paintings' supports (the panels and canvases) is often just as important.

Conservators collaborate closely with scientists and curators to decide the most appropriate form of treatment for each picture. They also work together to study the techniques used by artists represented in the collection.

The science of conservation

When a painting is being closely studied, or undergoing conservation treatment, modern scientific methods are always important aids. Powerful microscopes and chemical analysis of minute samples of paint give information about the pigments and media used to create a painting, and about the layer structures involved.

X-radiography and infrared reflectography can expose the artist's preliminary workings beneath the paint surface, which often reveals their early thinking.

New research by National Gallery curators, scientists and conservators is published every year in the National Gallery Technical Bulletin, which is now available to purchase online.

Scholarship at the gallery

The National Gallery has pioneered and maintains a tradition of scholarly collaboration between dedicated teams of curators, scientists, conservators and archivists. The Gallery's collection catalogues are internationally recognised as setting the standard for such publications.

Scholarly articles specifically devoted to the scientific study of pictures are published in the National Gallery Technical Bulletin, now in its 30th year.

The National Gallery sees itself at the heart of a thriving community of art historians. By forging links with other organisations, the Gallery seeks to support and advance excellence in the research of European painting, both nationally and internationally.

The Gallery's own scholarship is enriched by our relationship with academics from other institutions, whether working as guest curators for our exhibitions or presenting papers in our active programme of conferences and seminars, some of which are jointly organised with external partners.

The National Gallery is recognised as an Independent Research Organisation by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

EDUCATION AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

The Education Department was set up about 30 years ago and its programmes are designed to show how the National Gallery's collection has the potential for inspiring individual creativity. The National Gallery has a responsibility to everyone, not just those who already understand how to enjoy the collection.

Outreach

As part of its wider strategic objective to provide access to the collection, the National Gallery is committed to finding imaginative and illuminating ways to nurture interest in its collection for a wide and diverse public.

The Gallery's outreach programme plays an intrinsic role in delivering this objective. The outreach projects are targeted at key community groups and are designed to creatively engage audiences who may encounter physical, social, emotional or intellectual barriers to accessing the collection through other educational provision.

By offering a range of interactive outreach projects the Gallery seeks to ensure that people who may have traditionally felt excluded are encouraged to experience and respond to the National Gallery Collection.

Students in further and higher education

National Gallery study sessions are designed especially for BA and MA students to provide a general introduction to exhibitions. They include talks by curators and artists, opportunities for discussion and entry to the exhibition.

The National Gallery also works with other institutions to deliver projects for students from a wide variety of disciplines. We have recently worked with students who produced pieces of music inspired by the collection, which were performed by the London Chamber Orchestra.

Schools

The National Gallery offers schools and colleges a large team of skilled and experienced Gallery education professionals to help teachers and their pupils access the collection. The paintings can be used to enrich learning in every area of the curriculum. A visit to the Gallery encourages students to learn how to read a painting and to enjoy looking at art. It can also show them how paintings can link with other subjects and with their own experiences.

Take One Picture

The 'Take One Picture' scheme invites UK primary schools to use a painting from the National Gallery's collection as a focus for teaching and learning across the curriculum. Each year a different National Gallery painting is chosen to provide a starting point for exploration. Hundreds of schools have taken up the challenge since the scheme began in 1995, and many of these submit work to the annual Take One Picture exhibition.

Adult Learning

Every day, there are free talks and tours for adult visitors to the Gallery. Debates, discussion groups, short courses and study days offer the chance to engage with and explore National Gallery paintings in more depth. For those who feel creative, there are practical sessions ranging from free lunchtime Talk and Draw activities to one-day life-drawing, print-making and sculpture workshops.

Families

Every Sunday is Family Sunday with a range of activities designed especially for families to enjoy and learn together. There is Magic Carpet storytelling for the under-5s and workshops for families with children aged 5 to 11, along with trails and audio tours.

LANGUAGES AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

Audio Guides

'60-Minute Tour'

This tour features the highlights on offer at the Gallery. It is available in English, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Russian, Polish, Portuguese, Dutch, Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin) and Korean.

Floorplan

Available in English, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

Welcome sheet available in Arabic, Greek and Hindi.

Companion Guide

Introduction to the collection, available in English, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish.

Masterpieces from the National Gallery

Book available in English, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Russian and Spanish.

Visitor's Guide

Guidebook available in Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese, Russian and Spanish.

THE NATIONAL GALLERY'S TOP 10 QUIRKY FACTS



The total floor area

At 46,369m² the total floor area is equivalent to six football pitches. The building's volume is 212,615m³, large enough to contain 2,156 London double-decker buses.



Size of the collection

There are over 2,300 paintings in the Gallery's collection, almost all of which are on display at any one time.



Number of visitors

The Gallery has over 4 million visitors a year. The Education Department hosts about 80,000 schoolchildren a year.



Sculptures

The sculptures on the Portico Entrance were originally meant for Marble Arch.



First painting

The first painting in the collection (NG1) is *The Raising of Lazarus* by Sebastiano del Piombo, acquired in 1824.



Newest acquisition

The latest addition to the collection is Titian's *Diana and Actaeon*, acquired at the beginning of 2009.

Smallest painting in the collection

Prince Charles Edward Stuart (The Young Pretender) by an unknown French artist at 7.6cm x 7cm.



Largest painting in the Gallery

Guido Reni's The Adoration of the Shepherds at 480cm x 321cm.



Size

Stubbs's Whistlejacket depicts a life-size horse.



Inspiration

Massys's An Old Woman ('The Ugly Duchess') was the inspiration for the Duchess in Sir John Tenniel's illustrations for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

