



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2023

THE  
NATIONAL  
GALLERY

# INTRODUCTION

**The National Gallery exists so that people can engage with great art.**

It is a public museum with a uniquely important collection of pictures for the benefit of all. It tells a coherent story of European painting spanning seven centuries and reflects how artists and the societies in which they lived have responded to myth and religion, history and contemporary events, landscape and the human form, and to the tradition of art itself. The National Gallery constitutes a living legacy of humanity's highest cultural achievements in painting and is an inestimable resource for understanding the world as we have inherited it.

We who currently have responsibility for the Gallery want to share this resource, and our enthusiasm for it, with the widest possible audience.

Established in 1824, the National Gallery is a national responsibility ultimately underwritten by Parliament. A quarter of a century ago the Gallery's statutory responsibilities were set out: to care for and add to the collection, to display it for the public, to advance scholarship and research, and to promote enjoyment and understanding.

Millions of people now visit the National Gallery every year and we reach many more online. We are committed to the idea of the National Gallery as a place of learning and enjoyment and we aim to realize the Gallery's potential as a source of inspiration for this and future generations.

From its inception the National Gallery has been free for all to visit. We believe that free admission represents a commitment to the public which must be reaffirmed and developed, a commitment to visitors of all ages, from Britain and abroad, and from all walks of life.

The National Gallery has an important role to play in enabling people to understand and negotiate the changes that society is undergoing by providing long-term historical perspective, mediated access to works of art of great significance and beauty, and a safe environment for reflection on questions of identity, beliefs, and on the relationship between the past and the present.

Taking the changing world our audience lives in as its context, and as we approach the National Gallery's bicentenary in 2024, this Strategic Plan sets out our vision for the future. It is rooted in the Gallery's traditions and strengths, but responds to both the new opportunities and new challenges we face.

The outcome of our Strategic Plan will be a stronger, more resilient museum, well prepared to fulfil our large ambitions for the decades ahead.

**DR GABRIELE FINALDI**  
**DIRECTOR, NATIONAL GALLERY LONDON**

# EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The broader landscape in which we operate presents significant challenges and constraints, some of them unprecedented. This is a time of fast-paced social change. Remarkable technological advances challenge traditional orthodoxies while offering extraordinary opportunities.

Over time the Gallery's audience has changed and it will go on changing. We must respond to that change. Over the last fifteen years we have seen that the growth of global tourism is shifting the balance of our audience, with nearly 70% of our visitors now coming from abroad.

At the same time, the digital revolution has increased access to information and content, creating an audience who visit with a world of knowledge available at the touch of a smartphone screen, and offering a new opportunity for us to respond to the growth and diversification of our audience and help give meaning and structure to the Gallery visit.

In spite of the uncertainties of our rapidly changing environment, we believe that people will go on being more curious, more cosmopolitan and more connected, and that the Gallery's collection, activities and scholarship must have a vastly broader reach and be available for all to use.

We believe that the Gallery must be a beacon of excellence through its collections and displays, through the quality of its programmes, its research, academic and education activities.

Among the very specific challenges the Gallery faces over the next few years are the following: to address and engage the contemporary visitor; to create a better visitor experience for a changing audience; to extend the range of the Collection; to be a leader in research and education; to develop the Gallery's estate, and to sustain the Gallery financially.

In the next five years we believe we can meet these challenges and opportunities head on, dramatically expanding the scope of our activity, whilst achieving the financial resilience that enables that to happen. Simply put, we will do more, and do it differently.

# THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

1

We will significantly expand our programmes and activities and work more with contemporary artists. Museum learning will be central to our ambition to foster engagement with the public.

2

We will seek to acquire major paintings and to build up the collection in little-represented or unrepresented areas of the history of art.

3

We will create a National Gallery with digital at its heart, to reflect a more digital world.

4

We will share our pictures with people across the UK and we will share our expertise to support regional museums.

5

We will invest in and develop our research capabilities to be an intellectual leader in the fields of technical art history and conservation science.

6

We will make a significant investment in our staff and undertake a major infrastructure project to accommodate them on a single site, the One Gallery Accommodation Hub.

7

To deliver these plans, we will grow our income with the aim of being 50% self-funding by 2022/3.

# OUR AMBITIONS



# 1

## TO EXPAND PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES TO ENGAGE WITH THE CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE

We aim to connect great art with people, and people with great art. We believe the Gallery's pictures speak across time and place and we will address our existing audience and engage new generations of visitors from Britain and abroad with new displays of the collection, with a more varied and lively series of special events and activities.

We will undertake a more ambitious programme of major exhibitions on the great masters, as well as shows which explore aspects of the collection and introduce visitors to lesser known facets of the history of art. These activities and programmes serve to engage the Gallery's traditional visitors, including members, but also to expand its audiences, reaching out to the younger generations and to communities that are less likely to be 'natural' visitors.

Our approach to learning at the Gallery is holistic and wide-ranging but we are conscious that the Gallery's educational offer, so important to developing engagement and understanding of art and creativity especially among children and young people, must be developed and our facilities upgraded.

Contemporary artistic practice will have an enhanced role in the Gallery's activity; artists, writers, musicians, dancers and figures from the world of culture, will contribute contemporary insights on the collection, exploring the intersection of the contemporary and the historical.

The Gallery will have a broader international reach: the majority of its large exhibitions will be organized in collaboration with international partners. More of our displays will tour nationally enabling us to engage with more varied audiences. At the same time, we must rethink how we use our physical estate to accommodate the collection and amenities to serve the needs of a growing public in London.



‘SUCH DETAILS MAKE  
THIS SHOW A DELIGHT:  
IT’S JUST ONE ROOM AND  
10 WORKS, BUT IT’S QUIETLY  
ENTHRALLING.’

THE EVENING STANDARD



WE WANT TO ADD  
EXCELLENCE TO EXCELLENCE  
AND LOOK BEYOND THE  
ESTABLISHED CANON

Bernardo Bellotto, *The Fortress of Königstein from the North*, acquired in 2017

## 2 NEW AREAS FOR COLLECTION GROWTH

The Gallery's collection has grown organically through acquiring works by the recognized artists of the European canon and also by advancing into the lesser known territories of art history. The collection must continue to be enhanced with preeminent paintings, adding excellence to excellence, and also reflect a broader interpretation of European art and its wider influence, including unrepresented schools and genres. We aim to acquire distinguished works by artists from outside the established European canon.

The collection must be more completely displayed and more gallery space is required to achieve this. We must present it so as to enrich understanding and to promote the public's enjoyment, thereby contributing to national cultural life and to the international republic of knowledge. Following the refurbishment of the Wohl Galleries (2015-17), a programme of renewal of older galleries to bring them up to the highest international environmental standards will continue with a complete renewal of Gallery 32 (2018-20), the largest room in the building.

# 3

## A DIGITAL NATIONAL GALLERY FOR A DIGITAL WORLD

Advances in technology and its role in society mean that the Gallery must now have a more varied, multi-layered and more tailored relationship with its physical and digital audiences, and it can have worldwide reach.

We have committed to an ambitious five-year programme of investment in digital transformation. The basis of this transformation is the simple insight that every aspect of the Gallery's activity from displays to education, from frontline scientific research to social communication, from publishing to broadcasting, has digital purchase.

We have turned that insight into three core programmes that will bring major change in the years ahead: we will transform the role of digital in our visitor experience, creating new websites, mobile applications, digital signage and email marketing that is unified and presents a continuous experience before, during and after the visit. We will invest in data analysis and audience research to adapt our business models for ticketing, donations and membership enabling us to price and promote with the suppleness the digital economy creates. And we will look deeply at how new technologies from Facebook Live to virtual reality and beyond create new models for the display and consumption of art.

The enormous opportunity here is one we will take. By 2023 digital must be fully embedded into our practice so that every talk, every lecture, every exhibition and display is designed not just to be physically experienced, but to be consumed as digital content. To do this will require the Gallery to think and act digitally in a cultural transformation that reaches across the whole organization. As we grow in the digital space, so we will offer leadership to the sector, sharing knowledge and know-how with other museums and cultural institutions both in the UK and round the world.

OUR #SUNFLOWERSLIVE  
EXPERIENCE WAS WATCHED BY  
OVER 12 MILLION PEOPLE  
AROUND THE WORLD



Curator Chris Riopelle speaking during #SunflowersLive





‘WE CAN HARDLY BELIEVE  
THAT LOCAL PEOPLE  
WILL SEE AN ARTIST  
THE STATUS OF HOLBEIN  
RIGHT HERE IN SHETLAND’

IAN TAIT, SHETLAND MUSEUM CURATOR

Hans Holbein the Younger, *A Lady with a Squirrel and a Starling* (Anne Lovell?), travelling to Shetland in 2018

# 4

## A NATIONAL GALLERY FOR ALL

Great art should enrich the daily life of everyone in Britain today, and we are committed to ensuring that the inspiration it brings can reach as many people as possible. The National Gallery is a resource and source of support for the entire country, not only for those who are able to visit the collection in Trafalgar Square.

Collaboration is fundamental to the way in which the Gallery is working nationally. Through creative and flexible partnerships we will ensure that the National Gallery's collection is widely known, shared and engaged with throughout the UK, and we will extend our current reach by fostering and developing relationships with smaller, under-resourced regional collections.

We see our collection and its curators, scientists, conservators and educators as a national resource. We are committed to sharing expertise and to an increasing range of programmes to enable this. As well as sharing great works from our collection throughout the UK through loans and through our masterpiece touring, more of our exhibitions and displays will tour nationally, enabling us to engage with more diverse audiences. We will extend the profile and impact of what we do through a more integrated and strategic approach.

In an expanded National Programme our activities will extend to encompass our nationwide collaborative education programmes as well as a greater use of digital resources. We will seek to share our expertise as widely as possible, to continue to enhance the national curatorial capacity for the future, and to contribute to the diversity of the national workforce by broadening our programme of skills sharing.

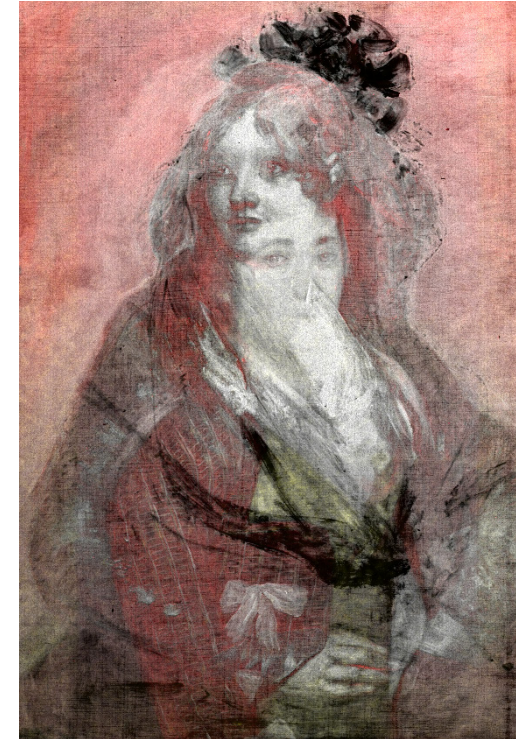
# 5

## ADVANCING INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP

The Gallery is a world leader in several of its areas of research, notably in the fields of collection cataloguing, conservation science and technical art history. The *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* is a universally respected publication and the Gallery plays a very important part in several European research programmes.

To continue to be a beacon institution we must be in a position to create an attractive and stimulating environment which yields significant research outcomes. Equally important is to find innovative ways to make the results of the Gallery's research available and relevant both to specialist audiences and to the general public.

Our ambition is greater still, to develop a National Gallery Research Centre which is at the cutting edge of research on painting and is preeminent in 'Thought Leadership' in our sector and at the heart of the international art museum network. The NG Research Centre will have a clear and ambitious remit and will be a significant generator of new art historical and technical research; it will advance in new interdisciplinary areas and it will develop academic and institutional collaborations both nationally and internationally as well as high-level training for museum professionals.



THE NATIONAL  
GALLERY  
TECHNICAL BULLETIN IS A  
UNIVERSALLY RESPECTED  
PUBLICATION





THE ONE GALLERY HUB  
WILL GIVE RISE TO  
NEW CREATIVE SYNERGIES  
AT THE GALLERY

# 6

## INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND DELIVERING THE ONE GALLERY ACCOMMODATION HUB

The Gallery's employees are of fundamental importance in enabling us to meet these challenges. The employment experience at the National Gallery must be a beacon of excellence in the sector and we will ensure that this is a feature of our recruitment, career progression, learning and development, health and wellbeing and retention plans. We are improving internal communication and increasing staff involvement in business improvement and planning exercises.

It is our ambition to make the visitor's experience of the Gallery excellent at every level and our partners who work in the galleries, at the information desks, in the shops and catering outlets play an increasingly important role in influencing people's perception of the organization.

The delivery in 2020 of the One Gallery Accommodation Hub in the North East corner of the Wilkins Building is a fundamental strategic objective: it will bring together in a single inspiring space most of the staff creating unprecedented opportunities for synergetic working.

# 7

## WE AIM TO BE 50% SELF-FUNDING BY 2022/3

In 2016 the then Government made a welcome commitment to maintaining the current levels of funding until 2020 ('flat cash') and the present Government has not altered the position. But in real terms 'flat cash' means a reduction in contribution over the period of about 5%. There is no provision for picture purchase (which is a statutory responsibility of the Gallery) in GiA. To realize our ambition of matching self-generated income to Grant-in-aid in order to deliver our activity plans and increase resilience, we will need to raise significantly more income from digital initiatives, developing new commercial opportunities (with the National Gallery Company) and increasing membership, among other activities.



AS WE LOOK TO  
**THE FUTURE**  
WE AIM TO BECOME MORE  
FINANCIALLY RESILIENT



THE  
NATIONAL  
GALLERY