The National Gallery’s Exhibitions Policy

Date on which this policy was approved by the Board of Trustees: 17 July 2014

Date on which this policy is due for review: 17 July 2019

Policy Owner: Director of Public Engagement

1. Exhibition aims

Our exhibitions aim to bring great paintings and other works of art to the Gallery and to display and interpret them to the highest possible standards in a balanced and stimulating programme in order to increase understanding and engagement with the collection. In this way National Gallery exhibitions support the Gallery’s overarching vision of ‘making Old Master painting part of everyday life’.

The specific aims of the exhibitions programme are:

- To increase understanding and engagement with the collection by presenting well-conceived and varied exhibitions, examining Old Master painting from a variety of perspectives, and always executed to the highest standards.
- To stimulate public interest in the Gallery and its collection and to attract a wide range of audiences in London and beyond, developing their interest in and understanding of Old Master paintings.
- To raise revenue to support the gallery and its activities, directly through ticket sales and sponsorship and indirectly through other commercial activities.

2. Exhibition scope and subject matter

Our exhibitions aim to increase the understanding of and engagement with the Gallery’s collection in particular and with Old Master painting in general. Exhibitions will frequently include major works from the collection, and show them in a variety of ways: illuminating the work of a single painter; taking a thematic approach; placing paintings or painters in a particular historical context; putting painting in the context of other arts; presenting a collector of art or the history of collecting at the Gallery or elsewhere; presenting the techniques of painting and the research the Gallery undertakes into those techniques.

Exhibitions may also relate to the collection in other ways: showing the work of an artist or groups of artists not represented in the collection but whose work illuminates it and the period of the Gallery’s collection; presenting an important collection of art; presenting a contemporary artist’s response to the collection, in particular through the Associate Artist scheme; showing the history of the National Gallery; presenting children’s art resulting from the Education department’s activities, notably the Annual Take One Picture display.

Our exhibitions are underpinned by the highest scholarly standards in the selection and arrangement of the exhibits, and in accompanying catalogues, digital information, films, colloquia and conferences. They offer the opportunity to extend and present new
scholarship, notably in the area of the scientific study of paintings as physical objects for which the gallery is renowned.

3. **Audiences:**
Our exhibitions programme aims to attract a wide range of audiences. In Trafalgar Square the programme enables us to ‘broaden our audiences and provide an exceptional visitor experience’ as well as to keep the Gallery at the forefront of public notice in the UK and abroad. Our touring exhibition programme makes the collection available to a wide public throughout the UK as part of our national programmes. Developing exhibitions in partnership with museums in the UK and abroad enables the Gallery to play its full part in the national and international museum community.

4. **Financial Contribution:**
Paying exhibitions make an important financial contribution to the Gallery’s income generating activities – directly through ticket sales and also through the exhibition associated publications and merchandise sold by NGC; exhibition visits may also drive increases to general revenue.

5. **Decision Making and Reporting Process:**
Decisions to proceed with paying exhibitions are taken by the Executive Committee on the basis of a business plan. The updated exhibitions programme is presented annually to the Board of Trustees.

Business plans, progress reports on current exhibitions and reports on past exhibitions are considered by the Executive Committee. The Board of Trustees receives regular reports on current exhibitions and considers the reports of exhibitions recently closed.

6. **Risk Management**
The Exhibitions Policy should be read in conjunction with the Gallery’s Exhibitions Risk Management Statement.