

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

I took up my post as Director in August and am delighted to be back at the National Gallery after thirteen years. It is a great honour to lead an institution that is held in the highest esteem throughout the world and is much loved by the public, and I look forward to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Central to the role of the Gallery is the enhancement of its collections with new acquisitions. Thanks to the generosity of the American philanthropist and art collector, Ronald S. Lauder, the Gallery has been able to acquire Giovanni da Rimini's *Scenes from the Lives of the Virgin and other Saints*. This exquisite and rare panel is the first work by him owned by the Gallery and it is in superb physical condition. It shows how the artistic innovations of Giotto were grafted onto the Byzantine pictorial tradition and reflects the experimental character of early *Trecento* Riminese painting. Similarly unrepresented in Trafalgar Square until now is the Danish painter, Laurits Anderson Ring (1854–1933). *A Road in the Village of Baldersbrønde (Winter Day)*, which dates from 1912, was purchased by the Gallery thanks to a generous legacy from David Leslie Medd OBE as well as support from a number of donors. Its combination of Nordic naturalism and geometrical elegance makes it an austere and haunting image. We are grateful to the Acceptance-in-lieu panel and the Arts Council for enabling Luca Signorelli's *Man on a Ladder*, a fragment of his Matelica altarpiece of the *Lamentation at the Foot of the Cross*, to join what is the finest collection of this Renaissance artist's works outside Italy.

Among the exhibitions held over the course of the year, two in particular stand out. *Goya: The Portraits*, sponsored by the National Gallery's Partner Credit Suisse, was the first exhibition ever held on this subject, exploring a highly significant aspect of Goya's production that was little known to the public. As the former Deputy Director of the Prado and the newly appointed Director at the Gallery, I was delighted to be both lender and receiver of the remarkable group of paintings from Madrid that were gathered together for this exhibition. It was particularly stimulating to work with Xavier Bray and Letizia Treves who curated the exhibition. The central thesis of *Delacroix and the Rise of Modern Art* was the influence of the nineteenth-century painter, Eugène Delacroix, on two generations of artists who defined different aspects of modernity in painting, beginning with Manet and Cézanne and leading on to Kandinsky and Matisse. An international

collaboration with the Minneapolis Institute of Art, it was directed in London by Christopher Riopelle, the Gallery's most experienced and productive exhibition curator. A smaller show in the Sunley Room that combined traditional art-historical research with the latest digital technology was *Visions of Paradise: Botticini's Palmieri Altarpiece*, which focused on the authorship, iconography and on the historical and theological context of this large panel of the 1470s. A virtual reconstruction of the demolished Florentine church of San Pier Maggiore for which it was painted was the result of the Gallery's collaboration with Cambridge University.

This year has been a time for farewells at the National Gallery. In August Sir Nicholas Penny who had been Director since 2008 retired after a period which saw some remarkable temporary exhibitions and several important picture acquisitions, notably the two late mythologies made by Titian for Philip II of Spain (purchased jointly with the Scottish National Gallery) and George Bellows's *Men of the Docks* which, as a picture by an American painter working in a European idiom, marked a new and promising direction for the collection. Nick's commitment to scholarship at the Gallery will be further demonstrated in May 2016 when his third catalogue devoted to the Italian sixteenth-century paintings will be published. Dr Ashok Roy, who joined the Gallery in 1977 and led its scientific research for nearly four decades, retired in February. As editor of the *Technical Bulletin* since its inception he made the Gallery a beacon of what we now confidently refer to as 'Technical Art History', a field in which he has been a world-renowned pioneer. Also in 2016, Roger Pearce who served as a warder and supervisor for 39 years took his retirement. He was responsible in 1987 for apprehending the man who shot the Leonardo cartoon.

The Gallery is fortunate to have many friends who help and support us in many different ways. We are grateful to them all.

GABRIELE FINALDI

