

### ART FUND STEPS UP WITH CRUCIAL SUPPORT FOR MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

- £3.6 million in grants and partnerships helping museums navigate the pandemic
- £2.8 million committed to acquisitions programme building collections of art
- Free ticketing and crowdfunding platforms provided much-needed income for organisations

Today Art Fund published its Annual Report for 2020/21. The report shows that the national charity for art swiftly responded to the pandemic by asking the sector what it most needed to support it through its most difficult year in living memory, helping hundreds of museums and galleries to stay connected with their communities.

£3.6 million in urgent funding was made available and went to 317 museums. Much of that was distributed through the Respond & Reimagine grants programme - £2.25 million - quick-turnaround critical funding designed to meet immediate need.

Art Fund also supported museums and galleries with its platforms to help with practical requirements. Art Tickets, a free ticket management system for museums, became a lifeline for venues new to online ticketing in the pandemic. It was used by 120 museums – a threefold increase on the year before. And the unique crowdfunding platform, Art Happens, continued to connect museums with generous supporters, helping them raise money for innovative and creative arts projects.

Art Fund's key role in supporting acquisitions continued the important work of growing and developing the UK's collections. In 2020, £2.8 million was committed to the acquisitions programme. Over 240 works of art joined public collections with Art Fund support across all its collecting programmes. The Wolfson Foundation extended their support for a further three years helping museums across the UK to keep investing in their collections at this challenging time.

A boost to morale came when five outstanding museums were announced as joint winners of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020. Acknowledging the financial pressures caused by Covid, the prize money was increased to £200,000 and divided equally between Aberdeen Art Gallery, Gairloch Museum, the Science Museum, South London Gallery and Towner Eastbourne. All had shown exceptional innovation in serving their audiences.

With the support of the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund continued to empower smaller museums to bring works from national or major collections

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to local audiences, with 15 grants awarded in 2020 and 18 exhibitions scheduled across the UK in 2021.

One of the highlights of the year, the **Together for Museums** campaign, illustrated the crucial support of Art Fund's donors and members. Building on the generosity of existing supporters and a public crowdfunding campaign which ran from November to March, over £1 million was raised, every penny contributing to emergency funding to help museums during the pandemic.

**Professional development**, and support for emerging curators, was also strengthened, particularly important at this time when many had been furloughed and were isolated from their peers. Curators supported through the Headley Trust continued their research into collection displays to increase audience access. New Collecting Awards enabled five curators to develop their collections in 2020 supported by individual donors and trusts including the Wolfson Foundation, the Ruddock Foundation for the Arts and the Coral Samuel Charitable Trust. Jonathan Ruffer curatorial grants supported 43 curators to develop their expertise. And the National Gallery Curatorial Traineeship Programme continued in 2020 with two new trainees benefiting from the opportunity to develop their skills.

Chris Smith, Chair of Art Fund said, "Art Fund's donors and members have proved as passionate as ever about supporting the UK's museums and galleries. This steadfast commitment has allowed us to step up with crucial support from the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, and we will continue to do so as this year begins the story of recovery."

Jenny Waldman, Art Fund Director said, "One thing left in no doubt by this past year is the vital role that museums and galleries play in their communities. Their determination to bring joy, alleviate isolation and aid wellbeing during lockdowns has been extraordinary. We are privileged to have been able to celebrate them and to support so many imaginative initiatives throughout the year. Museums and galleries are not yet out of the woods and many face huge difficulties but together with our supporters we will ensure the sector thrives once again."

Art Fund also helped many art lovers and supporters stay connected during lockdown. A digital pivot online in its **events programme** broadened access with panel discussions, talks and virtual tours. To keep everyone connected to their favourite places, even when they couldn't visit, a new podcast, **Art & Stuff**, was launched which revealed hidden stories behind intriguing museum objects; and the **Art Pass Recommends** film series now takes viewers on an in-depth tour of some of the UK's most fascinating collections. Members continued to receive each issue of Art Quarterly magazine, with original features on art and museums.

Three new trustees were appointed to Art Fund's board of trustees at the beginning of 2020: Madeleine Kennedy; Professor Susan Lambert; and Dr Satish Padiyar.

Art Fund's programmes in 2020 were made possible thanks to the generosity and commitment of many trusts, foundations and individuals, including Art Fund members who support museums through the National Art Pass, Art Partners, and those who leave a gift to Art Fund in their will.

To view Art Fund Annual Report 2020, visit <https://www.artfund.org/assets/downloads/art-fund-annual-report-2020-2021.pdf>

For images, visit: <https://bibli.artfund.org/web/6eed884a7bbb64b4/annual-report-pr/>

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Notes to editors:

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### **About Art Fund**

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19 Art Fund has made £2 million in adapted funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by the 130,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. In a unique edition of the prize for 2020, Art Fund responded to the unprecedented challenges that all museums are facing by selecting five winners and increasing the prize money to £200,000. The winners are Aberdeen Art Gallery; Gairloch Museum; Science Museum; South London Gallery; and Towner Eastbourne.

[www.artfund.org](http://www.artfund.org)