# Oil paintings from University of Birmingham go online for the first time

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Public Invited to Tag Paintings to Help Build a National Online Catalogue

The Public Catalogue Foundation (PCF), in partnership with the BBC, today announced that all oil paintings in public ownership in Birmingham, including at the University, have been added to the Your Paintings website for the nation to enjoy. Your Paintings is a project to create a complete online catalogue of every oil painting in the national collection, at **www.bbc.co.uk/yourpaintings (http://www.bbc.co.uk/yourpaintings)** .

Paintings by Gainsborough, Hogarth, Monet, Rossetti and Whistler are among the 3,000 paintings in Birmingham that can now be seen on Your Paintings. There are 12 Birmingham collections that are involved in this ground-breaking national project to reveal paintings that are both on display and in store across the country.

Major collections such as those at The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, and the University of Birmingham are featured alongside smaller collections including the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists and the Birmingham and Midland Institute. Together their paintings provide a unique insight into the history and artistic heritage of Birmingham.

To help the BBC and PCF identify and catalogue what can be seen in each painting, the public is being invited to 'tag' the nation's paintings. Tagging is fun, easy and you don't need to be an art expert to do it. The results will allow future users of the Your Paintings website to find paintings of subjects that interest them. Your Paintings Tagger is at **http://tagger.thepcf.org.uk (http://tagger.thepcf.org.uk/)**

Claire Mullett, Deputy University Curator, Research and Cultural Collections at the University of Birmingham, said:

*"The University of Birmingham's Campus Collection of Fine Art is displayed throughout departments and spaces inside and outside, across the campuses of Edgbaston, Selly Oak, Birmingham city centre and Stratford-upon-Avon. The PCF project has been a great way to bring the works together for the public to see, at a glance, the breadth and diversity of the collection."*

Andrew Ellis, Director, the Public Catalogue Foundation, said:

*"No country has ever embarked on such a monumental project to showcase its entire painting collection online. Working with collections and individuals all over the UK, this project will reveal to the world the UK's extraordinary holding of oil paintings."*

Roly Keating, Director of Archive Content, BBC, said:

*"Our partnership with the PCF encapsulates so many of the BBC's ambitions, both as a public service broadcaster and key supporter of the UK arts sector. Your Paintings will be a hugely valuable learning resource for our audience and demonstrates the power of working with partners to open up the nation's cultural resources."*

**Bratby, John Randall** 1928-1992
*Self Portrait* c.1980 © the artist's estate/Bridgeman Art Library
Oil on canvas 90 x 60cm

**University of Birmingham**

A popular part of the University of Birmingham's oil painting collection is a collection of sunflowers and *Self Portrait* by John Bratby. These decorate the Bratby Bar, named after the artist, who was given an honorary degree from the University of Birmingham in 1992, in the Staff House.

**Gainsborough, Thomas** 1727-1788
*The Harvest Wagon* 1767
Oil on canvas 120 x 144cm

**The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham**

This picture presents a nostalgic, idealised vision of the English countryside and shows the changing autumn colours of the harvest season. According to tradition, Gainsborough gave *The Harvest Wagon* to his friend Walter Wiltshire in return for the leading grey horse featured in the picture. The two young women looking upwards are believed to be portraits of Gainsborough's daughters, Mary and Margaret.

**Degas, Edgar**
1834-1917
*Jockeys before the Race* 1878-1879
Oil, essence, gouache and pastel on paper
107 x 73cm

**The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham**

In this painting

Degas disregards conventional composition rules by placing a pole in the foreground that runs from the top to the bottom of the painting, dividing it vertically and slicing through the head of the nearest horse. *Jockeys* before the Race is one of the most striking and important paintings in the Barber Institute of Fine Art's collection.

## Notes to Editors

**About Your Paintings**

Your Paintings is a partnership project between the BBC and the Public Catalogue Foundation (PCF) to put the United Kingdom's entire collection of oil paintings online at **www.bbc.co.uk/yourpaintings (http://www.bbc.co.uk/yourpaintings)** . This website is emerging as a unique learning resource, showing not only photographs and information about each painting but also selected BBC TV archive footage and links to further information. The website was launched at the National Gallery in the summer of 2011. Currently, the site shows around 104,000 paintings from 1,400 collections.

In total, the national oil painting collection amounts to some 200,000 works, held in 3,000 galleries, museums, universities, hospitals and other public institutions from across the UK, making it one of the largest and most diverse collections of paintings in the world. The plan is for all these paintings to be online by the end of 2012.

With the help of crowd-sourcing technology pioneered by the Astrophysics Department at the University of Oxford to classify galaxies, and art historical input from the University of Glasgow, the public are being invited to go online and help classify or 'tag' the paintings catalogued by the PCF so that in due course the paintings can be searchable by subject matter. Paintings can be tagged by visiting **http://tagger.thepcf.org.uk/ (http://tagger.thepcf.org.uk/)**

**About the Public Catalogue Foundation**

The PCF is a registered charity. It was launched in 2003 to create a photographic record of all the oil paintings in public ownership in the United Kingdom. In addition to publishing its work online, the PCF is also publishing a series of printed catalogues.

The painstaking research to locate the paintings up and down the country and collate the data has been carried out by 50 researchers. Over 30 fine art photographers have been employed to take photographs of these paintings over the life of the project. London-based staff focus on fundraising, processing and editing the data that comes in from the field, and clearing copyright.

The PCF is funded principally by grants and donations. Under 20 per cent of its funding comes from the public sector. Whilst many hundreds of individuals and institutions have supported its work, the PCF's principal funders are Arts Council England, Christie's, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust, The Monument Trust, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and the Wolfson Foundation.

The PCF was founded by Dr Fred Hohler. Its Trustees are Charles Gregson (Chairman of the PCF), Robert Hiscox (Chairman of Hiscox plc), Menna McGregor (Clerk of the Mercers' company), Alex Morrison (Founder and Managing Managing Director of Cogapp), Richard Roundell (Vice–Chairman of Christie's UK), Marc Sands (Director of Audiences and Media at Tate), Dr Charles Saumarez Smith (Chief Executive of the Royal Academy), Graham Southern (Founding Director of Blain Southern) and the artist Alison Watt. The Director is Andrew Ellis.

For more information go to **www.thepcf.org.uk (http://www.thepcf.org.uk/)**

**About BBC Online**

BBC Online is BBC's portfolio of websites, available at bbc.co.uk. It comprises ten Products – News, Sport, Weather, CBBC, CBeebies, Knowledge & Learning, Homepage, Search, TV & iPlayer and Radio & Music. In April 2011, it had 31.7 million unique browsers and was the fourth most popular website in the UK. It is the only UK-owned website in the UK top ten. Your Paintings is part of Knowledge & Learning.

The BBC creates partnerships with the arts sector that go beyond broadcast, from sharing expertise to widening public engagement in UK arts.

**Media Enquiries**

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