

## Birmingham's Barber Institute and London's National Gallery swap masterpieces to celebrate anniversary

Posted on Thursday 13th June 2013

(<http://barber.org.uk/>) An outstanding group of Old Master and 19th-century paintings – including masterpieces by Poussin, Turner, Monet and Manet – go on show at the National Gallery, London this summer as part of the celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the foundation of Birmingham's **Barber Institute of Fine Arts** (<http://barber.org.uk/>). Birth of a Collection: Masterpieces from the Barber Institute of Fine Arts runs from 22 May to 1 September 2013.



At the same time, outstanding portraits by Lucas van Leyden, Rembrandt, Goya and Cézanne, on loan from the National Gallery, are paired with comparable works at the Barber Institute, University of Birmingham. About Face: European Portrait Masterpieces from UK National Collections runs at the Barber Institute from 17 May – 1 September 2013.

Birth of a Collection features the outstanding first 12 paintings acquired by Professor Thomas Bodkin, the Barber Institute's first director, for the Henry Barber Trust after his appointment in 1935. While the Barber Institute's galleries were under construction and unready to receive works of art (1936-39), nine of this group of paintings were lent to, and displayed or stored at, the National Gallery, thanks to the support and friendship of the Gallery's brilliant young director, Kenneth Clark. For the first time in more than 70 years, this exhibition reunites this group of exceptional paintings in Trafalgar Square, together with the two further works that were shown at the Tate Gallery and one that remained with the dealer until coming to the Barber. Old Masters in the loan include works by Simone Martini, Cima da Conegliano, Frans Hals and Poussin. From the 19th century are celebrated works by Turner, Monet and Manet.

This loan is complemented by a small loan over the same period of some of the Barber Institute's finest objets d'art to the Wallace Collection, London, whose own collection, like that of the National Gallery, has been a benchmark of quality to which the Barber has aspired. The loans include: a superb, ancient Greek, bronze helmet from Olympia; a magnificent and rare 17th-century ornamental English salt-cellar (the 'Butleigh Salt'); an intriguing bronze sculpture of a boy on a goat, acquired as by one of the greatest sculptors of the Italian Renaissance; and an exquisite carved bloodstone bowl, lavishly mounted by a former owner, William Beckford, one of the most extraordinary collectors in British history.

About Face brings to the Barber four outstanding portraits from the National Gallery and provides some fascinating insights into the development of this genre in Europe between 1450 and 1914. The display also features a select group of superlative 17th-century English and Northern European portrait miniatures and drawings from the Royal Collection, which are displayed alongside related works from the Barber's own collection. Also included in About Face is Sir Peter Lely's magnificent and enigmatic figure group, The Concert, from the Courtauld Gallery (lent in exchange for Gauguin's Bathers in Tahiti).

The Barber's Director, Nicola Kalinsky, said: "It is very fitting that the highpoint of our anniversary takes the form of collaborations with major UK collections – and particularly the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection. Not only does the loan to the former have great historical resonance, but also Lady Barber stipulated that everything bought for the Barber should be "...of that standard of quality required by the National Gallery or the Wallace Collection". I am sure that the 12 paintings that form Birth of a Collection will look quite at home in the National Gallery, likewise our loans to the Wallace, while the London masterpieces visiting the Barber will fit perfectly alongside their Birmingham equivalents."

Nicholas Penny, Director of the National Gallery, said: "The National Gallery is grateful to the Barber Institute for the very imaginative way that it is collaborating with us to celebrate its 80 years of existence."

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Birmingham is celebrating its 80th anniversary with a year-long programme of activity in 2013.

Accompanying the exhibitions is a richly illustrated and newly researched anniversary publication, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts: Foundations of a Collection (Scala Publications Ltd). This includes essays by specialists from the Barber and the University on: the Barbers; the University's response to Lady Barber's gift; music at the Barber in its early years; and Thomas Bodkin and the acquisitions he made for the collection.

### Birth of A Collection: Masterpieces from the Barber Institute of Fine Arts

22 May – 1 September 2013

Room 1, National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DN

Opening Times: Daily 10:00 – 18:00; Fridays 10:00 – 21:00

### Works of Art from the Barber Institute at the Wallace Collection 22 May - 1 September 2013

Porphyry Court, Wallace Collection, Manchester Square, London W1U 3BN

Opening Times: Daily 10:00 – 17:00

### About Face: European Portrait Masterpieces from National Collections

17 May – 1 September 2013

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TS

Opening times: Mon-Fri 10:00 – 17:00; Sat & Sun 11:00 – 17:00

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## Notes to Editors

**Image:** Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), Tancred and Erminia, c1634. ©The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

### The Barber Institute

Hattie, Lady Barber, widow of wealthy Birmingham-born lawyer and property developer Sir William Henry Barber, wished to endow the University with sufficient funds to construct, equip and maintain a purpose-built art gallery and concert hall to be used 'in perpetuity by the University for the study and encouragement of art and music'. While her own collection of fine and decorative art, which she bequeathed to the Institute, was limited in quantity and quality, Lady Barber insisted that 'all additional purchases for the Collection shall be of that standard of quality required by the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection'.

