



WORKS OF ART ADVISORY PANEL

Wednesday 5 February 2020

Present:

Baroness Maddock (Chair)

Earl Clancarty

Lord Cormack

Lord de Mauley

Lord Faulkner of Worcester

Lord Lingfield

Baroness Massey of Darwen

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall

Lord Razzall

Apologies were received from Lord Bird, Baroness Bull and Lord Crathorne.

In attendance: Patrick Vollmer (Director of Library Services), Melissa Hamnett (Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art), Melanie Unwin (Deputy Curator), Sileas Wood (Assistant Curator) and Edward McCarthy (Secretary).

1. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

None.

2. LORD SPEAKER PORTRAIT UPDATE

The Deputy Curator gave an oral update.

The portrait of the Lord Speaker by Andrew Festing has been finished and accepted into the Parliamentary Art Collection and is currently being framed. The Curator's Office have been informed that Andrew Festing wishes to include the painting in the Royal Society of Portrait Painters' exhibition at the Mall Galleries.

The Panel **agreed** to ask the Lord Speaker whether the unveiling event could take place prior to the exhibition in May.

3. UPDATE ON MACLISE CONSERVATION PROJECT

Dr Elizabeth Woolley and Samuel Whittaker attended to discuss the conservation work, alongside Caroline Babington, Collections Care Manager and project lead for the Maclise conservation.

Dr Elizabeth Woolley outlined the history of the conservation work on the Maclise paintings in the Royal Gallery and Samuel Whittaker demonstrated how better lighting could improve the appearance and visibility of the paintings.

The Panel **agreed** to explore the possibility of a low-cost temporary lighting solution rather than waiting to improve the lighting as part of the Restoration and Renewal Programme. The Curator's Office agreed to put together a business case.

4. POSSIBLE ACQUISITION: FRANK BRANGWYN: STUDY FOR A TANK IN ACTION

A study for a tank attack by Sir Frank Brangwyn for an unrealised House of Lords mural is offered to the Panel for purchase from a private collector. The study was part of Brangwyn's original scheme for the Royal Gallery, which then changed from the First World War to the British Empire. The seller is offering the work for £5,257.80, which is based on the price the House paid at auction in 2017 for *The Gun Crew*, a study from the same series and of a similar size.

The Panel **agreed** to put forward a business case and to ask Black Rod's Office about the possibility of an exhibition in the Royal Gallery.

5. POSSIBLE ACQUISITION: JOHN PARTRIDGE: PORTRAIT OF LORD MELBOURNE (1779-1848)

Lord Cormack introduced the agenda item, highlighting the fact that the House of Lords does not have a portrait of Lord Melbourne. The painting is by John Partridge and is currently in a gallery. It is priced at £30,000 but it was thought that there may be room for substantial negotiation. If the Panel chooses not to buy the portrait it will be offered to the House of Commons.

The Panel **agreed** to view the painting at the next meeting and the Curator's Office agreed to explore with the Finance Director whether funding would be available. The Secretary also agreed to investigate the possibility of purchasing the work jointly with the House of Commons Works of Art Committee.

6. POSSIBLE LOAN: PORTRAIT OF LORD GROCOTT

The Panel **agreed** to request on loan a portrait of the Lord Grocott by Daphne Todd from the University of Leicester. The proposed dates of the loan are from the beginning of June until the end of July 2020.

The Panel discussed potential locations and **agreed** that the portrait could be displayed in the Bishops' Corridor for the duration of the loan.

7. POSSIBLE LOAN: PORTRAIT OF BARONESS BENJAMIN

A portrait of Baroness Benjamin by June Mendoza has been offered on loan by the sitter. The Panel **agreed** to accept the loan with a view to hanging it in Millbank House.

The Panel **agreed** to investigate the possibility of a display in the Royal Gallery in order for the painting to be available to a wider audience.

8. DISPLAY PROPOSAL: QUEEN CAROLINE

The Panel **agreed** a proposal for a display in Millbank House about the trial of Queen Caroline in order to mark the 200th anniversary of the trial.

9. DAMAGE TO ARTWORKS

The Head of Heritage Collections and the Assistant Curator gave an oral update on damage to artworks.

A Pugin desk in the library suffered water damage during the Christmas recess due to a leak in the Committee corridor. Conservation mitigation work ensured the desk was salvaged. Water damage on 20 December on the first floor of the West Front corridor affected a large selection of artworks. 28 frames had to be removed and three of the works underwent emergency conservation in the Parliamentary Archives. Another ten items also had to be removed from their frames.

The book chariot by Fred Bear in the House of Lords library in Millbank House has also been damaged although it is unclear how this has happened. The work is currently offsite with the artist for conservation.

The Panel **took note**.

10. HISTORIC FURNITURE UPDATE

The Head of Heritage Collections gave an oral update.

A pilot project for new committee room furniture has been trialled in committee room 6, largely driven by demands for better audio-visuals in committee meetings. The feedback so far has been favourable and there is now a proposal to roll out the pilot to other committee rooms, including committee room 4. Much of the historic furniture will have to go into storage as a result and the Historic Furniture department is attempting to make some changes to the design. Fred Bear has offered advice in order to soften the contemporary aesthetic and ensure that the new furniture blends well with the surroundings.

The Panel **took note** and agreed to discuss further at the next meeting once Members have had a chance to see the furniture in committee room 6.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Curator's Office reported that they would like two Members to form a sub-group with Members of the House of Commons in order to decide on the viability of a touring exhibition of works from the Parliamentary Art Collection during the Restoration and Renewal Programme. It is anticipated that terms of reference for the new group will be agreed in March with a view to taking evidence and reporting at the end of June. Interested Members of the Panel were asked to contact the Secretary.

The Panel **took note** and **agreed** to discuss the proposed exhibition at the next meeting.

Edward McCarthy
Secretary