

TATE

PRESS RELEASE: David Starkey joins campaign to save Rubens for the nation

The historian David Starkey has lent his support to Tate Britain's campaign, backed by The Art Fund, to acquire for the nation Rubens's oil sketch *The Apotheosis of James I: Multiple Sketch for the Banqueting House Ceiling* (1628-30). Tate has today united the sketch with the ceiling paintings at the Banqueting House in Whitehall for probably the first time since their completion in 1634. The works are brought together on the same day, 5 June, that Rubens first arrived in London in preparation for his meeting with Charles I about the Banqueting House commission on 6 June 1629.

Speaking about the sketch, David Starkey said: "This work is of the utmost significance to British history. The Banqueting House with its stunning Rubens ceiling is all that remains of the original Whitehall Palace after it was destroyed by fire in 1698. The ceiling was originally commissioned by James I of England and VI of Scotland to celebrate his achievement in bringing about the peaceful union of Scotland and England with his accession to the English throne after the death of Elizabeth I. The Banqueting House ceiling is the most important painting set within an architectural context in England and this sketch is *the* key to its composition. The loss of the sketch would be a fundamental betrayal of our national heritage and it is inconceivable that it move from Britain."

In March Tate Britain, together with leading art charity The Art Fund, announced that it was actively seeking support to raise £6 million to save *The Apotheosis of James I: Multiple Sketch for the Banqueting House Ceiling* (1628-30). The large-scale oil sketch, valued at £11m, has been owned by a private collection in England for over two hundred years and is offered to Tate for £6m net of special tax concessions.

Tate has so far secured over £1.56m towards acquiring the sketch including a grant of £500,000 from The Art Fund, £300,000 from Tate Members and £62,000 from individuals and members of the public. The Art Fund has built a dedicated website for the campaign: www.artfund.org/savetherubens. Anyone wanting to donate money can do so from this website, which can also be accessed via Tate Online: www.tate.org.uk/rubens.

Stephen Deuchar, Director of Tate Britain said: "Rubens's impact on British art, not least through his pupil Anthony Van Dyck, was profound, and the sketch for the Banqueting House ceiling celebrating the union of England and Scotland is an icon of British history as well as a very beautiful work of art. This sketch, which represents Rubens's first visualisation of the project, allows us into the mind's eye of one of the greatest artists working anywhere at the time and shows the earliest stage of his creative process. There could simply be no better place than Tate Britain to explore its national importance and recognise its truly memorable contribution to British art history. It will take its place in our galleries - a crucial place - as a key work in the rich narrative of British art at Tate Britain."

David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund, said: "Seeing Rubens's sketch alongside the completed Banqueting House ceiling is a powerful reminder of its enormous importance to our heritage and history. Rubens's initial design aimed to glorify monarchy and the Stuart dynasty - but almost twenty years later the completed ceiling became one of the last things Charles I saw as he walked to his execution. There can be no doubt that this unique treasure in the history of British art must be saved."

Major General Keith Cima, Resident Governor of the Tower of London and Director of the Banqueting House Whitehall, both managed by Historic Royal Palaces, said: "As the sketch is an integral part of the story of the unique ceiling paintings at the Banqueting House, Historic Royal Palaces fully supports Tate Britain's campaign to raise the funds required to secure the sketch for the nation. We also encourage the public to visit the Banqueting House Whitehall to see for themselves the scale and magnificence of the finished product of the sketch, especially as the ceiling paintings are the only Rubens work to remain today in their original location. As a conservation charity with no funding from the Government and the Crown, visitors will also be supporting us in our charitable work to ensure the Banqueting House and its Rubens ceiling paintings survive for future generations to enjoy."

The Banqueting House was designed by Inigo Jones and constructed between 1619 and 1622. A commission for ceiling paintings was first

apparently discussed with Rubens by James I (1603-25) and his advisers. James's son and successor Charles I (1625-49) commissioned the paintings while Rubens was in London between 1629-30 acting as a diplomat working for peace between Spain and England. In 16th and 17th century England the principal court artists were rarely British born - the majority came from the Netherlands, and many, like Rubens, were from the city of Antwerp.

The Apotheosis of James I: Multiple Sketch for the Banqueting House Ceiling shows the first visualisation for seven of the nine finished ceiling canvases with The Apotheosis of James I as the largest and most important in the centre of the sketch. Having brought union, peace and plenty to Britain James I is seen ascending to heaven. The eventual nine canvasses were painted in Rubens's Antwerp studio and sent to London, where they were installed around mid-March 1636. Charles I was a great patron of the arts. It was under this magnificent cycle of paintings that Charles I was to be led just moments before he was executed on scaffolding set against the wall of the Banqueting House on 30 January 1649.

The Apotheosis of James I: Multiple Sketch for the Banqueting House Ceiling is currently on display at Tate Britain until 31 July, where it is shown alongside Apollo bestowing Royal Liberality, suppresses Avarice, modello about 1632-33 (The Courtauld Institute Gallery), a subsequent 'intermediate' sketch for one of the nine ceiling paintings.

Tate Britain, Room 1, Level 2 galleries
Open 10.00-17.50 every day. Admission Free.
For information please call 020 7887 8888 or visit www.tate.org.uk

For further information, please contact Sarah Harrison or Helen Beeckmans, Tate Press Office, Millbank, London SW1P 4RG Call 020 7887 8730/2 Email press.office@tate.org.uk
To register for high-resolution images from Tate's press image service visit <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/pressoffice/pressimages>

For more information about The Art Fund and fundraising website contact Hannah Fox on hfox@artfund.org, 020 7225 4888 or 07912 777761

For more information about the Banqueting House, Whitehall contact Natasha Woollard on 020 3166 6303, Natasha.woollard@hrp.org.uk

Notes to editors

The Banqueting House

This revolutionary building, the first in England to be designed in a Palladian style by Inigo Jones, was finished in 1622 for James I.

Intended for the splendour and exuberance of court masques, the Banqueting House is probably the most famous for one real life drama: the execution of Charles I which took place here in 1649 to the 'dismal, universal groan' of the crowd. One of Charles' last sights as he walked through the Banqueting House to his death was the magnificent ceiling, painted by Peter Paul Rubens in 1630-34. The Banqueting House is looked after by Historic Royal Palaces which also care for the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace and Kew Palace. We help everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society, in some of the greatest palaces ever built. A public corporation, we receive no funding from Government or the Crown, so we depend on the support of our visitors, members, donors, volunteers and sponsors. Registered charity number 1068852. For more information please visit www.hrp.org.uk

The Art Fund

The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity. It offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections, campaigns on behalf of museums and their visitors and promotes the enjoyment of art. It is entirely funded from public donations and has 80,000 members. Since 1903 the charity has helped museums and galleries all over the UK secure 860,000 works of art for their collections. Recent achievements include: Helping secure Anthony d'Offay's collection, ARTIST ROOMS, for Tate and National Galleries of Scotland in February 2008 with a grant of £1million; putting together a unique funding package to ensure Dumfries House in Ayrshire and its contents were secured intact for the nation in July 2007; and running the 'Buy a Brushstroke' public appeal which raised over £550,000 to keep Turner's Blue Rigi watercolour in the UK. For more information contact the Press Office on 020 7225 4888, or visit www.artfund.org