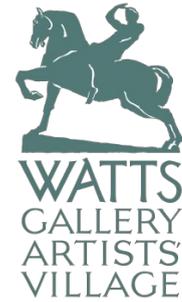


Press Release

Release: Immediate



Important painting by G.F. Watts has been acquired for the nation and allocated to Watts Gallery

Watts Gallery – Artists' Village

A significant painting by George Frederic Watts OM RA (1817-1904) has been allocated to Watts Gallery – Artists' Village via HM Government's Acceptance in Lieu scheme, run by the Arts Council.

Commissioned in 1848, the large-scale painting *Coriolanus* marks an important moment in the artist's career, and its allocation to Watts Gallery Trust enables the painting to enter a public collection for the first time in its history.

In his own lifetime, G.F. Watts was widely considered to be one of the greatest painters of the Victorian age. He was an outstanding portraitist, sculptor, landscape painter and symbolist and became the first living artist to have a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Watts is credited with the revival of the fresco technique in Victorian England, this interest exemplifying his strong sense of mission as a public artist. Commissions included *St George Overcomes the Dragon* (1848-1853) at the Houses of Parliament and *Justice: a Hemicycle of Lawgivers* (1853-59) in Lincoln's Inn.

In 1848, the artist received a commission from Henry Maurice Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3rd Marquess of Lansdowne (1780-1863), to paint a pair of murals for the Entrance Hall of the family home, Bowood House in Wiltshire. Over the next couple of years, Watts produced two large frieze-like works for his patron: the fresco of *Achilles and Briseis* and a large-scale oil painting of *Coriolanus* – believed to be the artist's last completed wall mural.

Following the partial demolition of Bowood in 1955, the pendant murals

were separated: the fresco was removed and transferred to Watts Gallery in six separate pieces, while the oil painting was later sold into a private collection.

Now, the two works will be reunited at Watts Gallery – Artists' Village, where the collection also includes fragments of a full-size coloured cartoon of Coriolanus and oil studies for both finished works, creating an opportunity to trace the progression and evolution of this composition and gaining a better understanding into the artist's painting methods.

Comments:

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay, Minister for Arts said:

"It's wonderful that G.F. Watts's Coriolanus has been allocated to the Watts Gallery where it can be reunited with his Achilles and Briseis and admired by the public. The Acceptance in Lieu scheme exists to bring paintings such as these to wider audiences and I'm delighted that this impressive piece will now go on display for all to enjoy."

Edward Harley, OBE, Chairman, Acceptance in Lieu Panel, said:

"I'm delighted that the Watts Gallery has been allocated Coriolanus by G.F. Watts – its first allocation under the scheme – where it will be reunited with its companion work, Achilles and Briseis. These two large mural paintings were produced by the artist for Bowood House in Wiltshire but were separated in 1955. I hope that this example will encourage others to use the Acceptance in Lieu scheme to continue to enrich public collections here in the UK."

Alistair Burtenshaw, Brice Director & Chief Executive, Watts Gallery Trust, said:

"We are thrilled that Coriolanus by G.F. Watts has been allocated to Watts Gallery, our first allocation through the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme. This important large-scale work will provide wonderful opportunities for audience engagement as we explore its history, Watts's artistic practice, its relationship to its companion work, Achilles and Briseis, and to our wider collection."

"On behalf of audiences, staff and trustees, I would like to convey thanks to the executors of the estate of Tessa Wheeler for offering this painting

through the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme, to DCMS for agreeing the allocation to Watts Gallery Trust and to Arts Council who administer the AIL Scheme. We very much look forward to engaging audiences with this special work."

Dr Laura MacCulloch, Head of Collections and Exhibitions at Watts Gallery – Artists' Village, said:

"The Bowood House commission marks a significant moment in the career of G.F. Watts, as he began moving away from working in fresco for wall paintings and turning to working in oil on canvas. Now, we have the opportunity to share that moment with visitors here at Watts Gallery – Artists' Village and, with reference to the preparatory material, to understand more about the evolution of Watts's influential practice. Thank you to everyone who has made this possible."

- Ends -

For high resolution images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/w8yia1uneb36gtb/AACYS3kaphL1xN9hxKDHUxYya?dl=0>

For more information please contact:

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Notes to Editors

This work was acquired through the Acceptance in Lieu scheme from the estate of Tessa Wheeler and its acceptance settled £21,000 of tax.

Details of the work are as follows:

George Frederic Watts (23 February 1817 – 1 July 1904)

Coriolanus, 1860

Oil on canvas

139.5 by 518 cm. (unframed); 150 by 532 cm. (framed)

Provenance

Commissioned by the 3rd Marquess of Lansdowne (1780-1863)

By descent to Charles Maurice Petty-Fitzmaurice, Earl of Shelburne (b.1941)

London Christies 26th July 1974 lot 153 as Achilles watching Briseis led away from his Tents, bought Carter

New York, Central Picture Galleries 1978

New York, Christie's, 25th June 1998, lot 311

Sotheby's, 1st July 2004, lot 290

Exhibition History

Manchester City Art Gallery, 1978;

Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1978-9;

Brooklyn Museum, 1979, Victorian High Renaissance cat. 11

Literature

G. Ambrose, Catalogue of the Collection of Pictures belonging to the Marquess of Lansdown KG at Lansdowne House and Bowood, Wiltshire, 1897, no. 355

Wilfrid Blunt, England's Michelangelo, 1975, pp. 32, 96, 100-2.

Veronica Franklin Gould, G. F. Watts. the Last Great Victorian, 2004, pp. 56, 59

M. S. Watts, George Frederic Watts, Annals of an Artist's Life 1912, vol. 1, pp. 174, 195-6.

The **Acceptance in Lieu** scheme is administered by the Arts Council. The Acceptance in Lieu Panel, chaired by Edward Harley OBE, advises on whether property offered in lieu is of suitable importance and offered at a value which is fair to both nation and taxpayer. AIL allows those who have a bill to Inheritance Tax to pay the tax by transferring important cultural, scientific or historic objects to the nation. Material accepted under the scheme is allocated to public collections and is available for all. In the last decade this important government initiative brought £461.2m worth of treasures into public ownership for the enjoyment of all - see more at:

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/tax-incentives/acceptance-lieu#section-1>

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million **Emergency Response Package**, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies administering the Government's unprecedented £1.96 billion **Culture Recovery Funds**. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19.

Watts Gallery – Artists' Village

George Frederic Watts OM RA (1817-1904) was widely considered to be the greatest painter of the Victorian age. He became the first living artist to have a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the artist's 'gift to the Nation' made a significant contribution to the founding collections of Tate Britain and the National Portrait Gallery.

In 1890, with his second wife Mary Seton Watts (1849-1938), Watts moved to Compton, a hollow in the Surrey Hills located on the Pilgrims' Way. Together they commissioned a country home and winter studios, Limnerslease, from leading Arts and Crafts architect Ernest George, and from 1891 they resided there. What followed was the creation of a unique Artists' Village, starting with the Grade I-listed Watts Chapel, an Arts and Crafts masterpiece designed by Mary and realised through a community arts project in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Watts Gallery, the first purpose-built art gallery in the UK dedicated to a single professional artist, opened its doors to the public in 1904. Together with Tate and the National Portrait Gallery, Watts Gallery provides a complete overview of G.F. Watts's art and aspirations.

Today Watts Gallery – Artists' Village is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation renowned for its community engagement programmes supporting those most in need of support in our region. Watts Gallery – Artists' Village has a dynamic and multi-sensory programme of creativity and making, and the Gallery, Limnerslease, the home and studios of our founders, G.F. and Mary Watts, the Grade I listed Watts Chapel and Pottery Buildings attract over 65,000 annual visitors.

For further information:

www.wattsgallery.org.uk | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

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Founded in 1903 Registered as a charity in 1905 Registered charity number 313612

