

3 April 2007

ART FUND COMMITS £5 MILLION TO INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY ART WITH BOLD NEW SCHEME



The UK's leading independent art charity makes a massive investment in a new scheme designed to boost museum collections over the next five years

The Art Fund, the UK's leading independent art charity, announced today it is committing £5 million to a new initiative aimed at developing the collections of international contemporary art in UK regional museums and galleries. The charity, which has helped museums and galleries acquire over 850,000 works of art since its foundation in 1903, wants to encourage a step change in the scale, ambition and ability with which regional centres can acquire contemporary works of art of international significance. The scheme, entitled **Art Fund International**, is the most significant and ambitious the charity has ever announced.

Art Fund International will run alongside the charity's regular grant-giving programme and be rolled out over a five year period following an application process in 2007. Uniquely, the initiative will require collecting institutions to form partnerships with contemporary exhibition spaces or independent commissioning agencies which are already successful in presenting contemporary art of this nature. The funding for this scheme is additional to The Art Fund's regular budget for grants for works of art.

Art Fund International has its origins in The Art Fund's centenary exhibition and conference in 2003, which identified the historic failure of UK museums in the 20th century to acquire contemporary art being produced by non-British artists like Picasso, Kandinsky and Hopper. The charity, keen to ensure Britain doesn't make the same mistakes in the 21st century, has decided to dedicate a separate fund of money with the specific aim of enriching the contemporary holdings of UK regional collections, most of which have in the past focused almost exclusively on the work of British artists.

Speaking about the new initiative David Barrie, The Art Fund's Director, said:

"We have wonderful museums and galleries packed full of historic art from all over the world, but over the last 100 years we've all too often turned our backs on the most exciting works being made by living artists from overseas. It's too late to put that right but this scheme is designed to make sure we don't make the same mistakes going forward. Art Fund International represents a major new investment in building the heritage of the future."

The Art Fund anticipates that up to five partnerships will be funded under the new scheme following a two-stage application process. Applicants will be asked to set out a

We are an independent charity committed to saving art for everyone to enjoy. Since we began in 1903, we have helped to save over 850,000 works of art. Today, some 80,000 members fund our work. In return, they receive free or reduced-price admission to many museums and galleries in the UK. This is not the only reason they join: they support us because they love art.

strategy for the formation of a collection of international contemporary art – such collections may be thematic, geographic or focused on a specific medium. The scheme will also consider site-specific works and commissions. All works of art will be 100% funded by The Art Fund.

The scheme will require museums and galleries to establish a partnership with at least one other non-collecting organisation. The idea is to encourage collaborative working between collecting institutions and other organisations working in contemporary art. Such a grouping might include an accredited museum or gallery; a publicly-funded contemporary art gallery (with a dedicated exhibitions programme) like Baltic in Gateshead; or a not-for-profit contemporary art commissioning agency, like Locus+ in Newcastle.

The Art Fund has established a new committee to take responsibility for the scheme, and in keeping with the principle of collaborative working has included some of the leading figures working in temporary exhibition spaces and contemporary commissioning agencies alongside some of its own trustees. The committee consists of five existing members of The Art Fund's Board: Professor Lord Renfrew (Chair); Professor Michael Craig Martin; Dr David Landau; Dr Deborah Swallow and Felicity Waley-Cohen. Four external members who have extensive international curatorial expertise have also joined the sub-committee: Catherine Lampert, former Director, Whitechapel; James Lingwood, co-Director, ArtAngel; Hans Ulrich Obrist, co-director of Exhibitions and Programmes and Director of International Projects, The Serpentine and Ralph Rugoff, Director, Hayward Gallery.

-Ends-

For further information please contact Sarah Harrison, Head of Press, The Art Fund on 020 7225 4820 or Tanera Bryden/Francesca Rivett-Carnac, Art Fund Press Office on 020 7225 4822/4837

Notes to editors:

- **Art Fund International** is open to all accredited museums and galleries in the UK except those in London and Edinburgh
- Partner institutions will most likely be local to the collecting institution but can be located anywhere, including London and Edinburgh
- Applications will be considered in a two stage process: registrations of interest by 22 June 2007 and then submission of formal bids by invited applicants only in September 2007. Successful applicants will be announced in November 2007
- The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity. It offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections and campaigns widely on behalf of museums and their visitors. It is entirely funded from public donations and has 80,000 members
- In 2006 The Art Fund offered over £5 million to museums and galleries to help them acquire new works of art for their collections
- Since 1903 the charity has helped museums and galleries all over the UK secure more than 850,000 works of art for their collections

- In the last decade nearly three-quarters of The Art Fund's funding towards international contemporary art has gone to institutions in London and Edinburgh including works by Cindy Sherman and El Anatsui
- In 2006 The Art Fund unveiled its first contemporary commission: a permanent 'Skyspace' at Yorkshire Sculpture Park by the American artist James Turrell
- In January 2007 The Art Fund successfully led the public appeal to save JMW Turner's *Blue Rigi* for Tate
- Independent of government, The Art Fund is uniquely placed to campaign on behalf of public collections across the UK. It was at the forefront of the campaign for free admission in 2001 and the campaign to save the Macclesfield Psalter in 2005
- Visit the charity's website at www.artfund.org/ / www.artfund.org/grants/artfundinternational.html