Art Fund membership tops 100,000 as UK public amongst most generous arts supporters in the world

The Art Fund has announced that it has topped the 100,000 members mark, making it one of the largest national arts membership charities. The news coincides with the launch of its 2012/13 annual report in which the Art Fund has also announced that in the past year it has paid out nearly £7 million to help museums and galleries buy works of art and share them with an increasing audience through supporting tours and exhibitions.

Stephen Deuchar, director of the Art Fund, said: “The UK public is among the most generous anywhere, consistently ranking among the top 5 or 10 countries for charitable giving. But we surely now lead the world in mass giving to the arts – no other country has an organisation like the Art Fund, with more than 100,000 museum visitors donating to help UK institutions build collections of outstanding art and other objects. We’re not just talking about major donors or those who can afford to see their name above a gallery – but mass giving by ordinary members of the public.”

The annual report for 2012/13 shows the largest amount ever raised by the Art Fund at over £11 million with membership income alone now bringing in over £4.1m annually, an increase of 45% since 2007. Much of this can be attributed to the launch of the National Art Pass in 2011, the card that gives free and discounted entry to hundreds of museums, galleries and historic houses nationally.

In 2012 the Art Fund paid £6.3 million to 70 museums and galleries for the purchase of works of art, including Titian’s Diana and Callisto for the National Gallery and National Galleries of Scotland; Ai Weiwei’s Kui Hua Zi ‘Sunflower Seeds’ for Tate; Rachel Whiteread’s Tree of Life unveiled on the façade of the Whitechapel Gallery; Edouard Manet’s Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus saved from export and bought by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; and Poussin’s Extreme Unction for the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. In the last five years the Art Fund has given over £26 million to help 187 museums buy works of art.

Widening the Art Fund’s programme of support to museums

The Art Fund also increased its support to museums to help make these collections available to a wider public. This has been achieved through ongoing support of the UK tour of the Artist Rooms collection of post war and contemporary art to a multitude of museums across the country, and now also through a national tour of Grayson Perry’s tapestries – The Vanity of Small Differences, which the Art Fund helped the Arts Council Collection and British Council Collection to acquire in 2012. This tour begins in Sunderland on Friday and will travel to Manchester Art Gallery, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool and Leeds City and Art Gallery. Furthermore, the Art Fund is thrilled to be supporting a special UK
tour in 2014 of English Magic – Jeremy Deller’s exhibition at this year’s Venice Biennale. For the first time the work commissioned by the British Council for the British Pavilion will be seen on UK soil when it goes on display in 2014 at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, London, then to Bristol Museum and Art Gallery before finishing its tour at Turner Contemporary in Margate.

National Art Pass encouraging more visitors into museums
Since launching the National Art Pass in April 2011, the Art Fund’s membership has grown by a third. Giving free or discounted entry to hundreds of museums, galleries, historic houses, castles and major exhibitions, the National Art Pass is encouraging people to visit more UK museums and galleries. Museums and their programmes are now being actively promoted as part of the UK-wide National Art Pass network – with over 100 venues joining since April 2011 – bringing the total to over 650.

Art Guide App – the official guide to art across the UK
Since its launch in April 2012 the Art Guide app has now reached 90,000 downloads with 85% return visitors. The Art Guide was created to support the National Art Pass and is a free comprehensive guide to visual arts in the UK. Through his multifaceted platform the Art Fund is both helping its members make the most of art and lending support in a new way to the network of museums across the country.

Future plans
The Art Fund will continue to increase its support to museums and galleries, helping them to buy new works, develop their collections and share them with visitors throughout the UK through supporting exhibitions and tours. Increased funding for curatorial development is a key aspect of support, with the continuation of the curatorial trainee scheme with the National Gallery in London and the annual £50,000 of funding for curatorial research and travel. The Art Fund will continue to build the National Art Pass network, encouraging increasing numbers of the public to visit museums. In early 2014 the Art Fund will also move to new premises in King’s Cross as part of a drive for increased organisational efficiency.

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About the Art Fund
The Art Fund is the national fundraising charity, helping museums to buy and show great art for everyone. Over the past 5 years we’ve given £26m to help nearly museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections, from ancient sculpture and treasure hoards to Old Master paintings and contemporary commissions. We also support a range of programmes which promote museums and their collections to wider audiences, including the national tour of the ARTIST ROOMS collection, the Art Fund Prize which rewards and celebrates Museum of the Year, and our Art Guide, a pioneering smartphone app offering the most comprehensive guide to seeing art across the UK. We are independently funded, the majority of our income coming from 95,000 members who, through the National Art Pass, enjoy free entry to over 220 hundred museums, galleries and historic houses across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions.

Find out more about the Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org.