

Britain in the World: New Display of the Collections at the Yale Center for British Art

NEW HAVEN – When the Yale Center for British Art reopens to the public on March 30, 2016, following an extensive fifteen-month building conservation project, visitors will not only experience a renewed masterpiece of modern architecture by Louis I. Kahn but also a freshly reimagined installation of the Center’s collections. More than five hundred works from the Center’s holdings, largely the gift of the institution’s founder, Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), will be displayed on the second and fourth floors. The newly renovated and reconfigured galleries will present the complex story of the development of British art from the time of the Protestant Reformation to the present, seen within a wider global context.



The installation, while tracing the growth of a native British school of artists, will make clear how frequently the story of art in Britain is about international exchange. The Netherlandish artists who provided the foundations of British art in the Tudor period; the Flemish Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck in the seventeenth century; and the Italian Canaletto, the German Johann Zoffany, and the Americans John Singleton Copley and Benjamin West in the eighteenth century will all be featured in the display. The new arrangement will address the impact of immigration and travel on British art and culture across the centuries and the role that the arts have played in the history of Britain’s imperial vision, exploring the ways in which the perception of the British Empire influenced how Britons saw themselves and others.



Returning to view will be many of the well-known treasures from the Paul Mellon Collection, such as the works of George Stubbs, including his painting *Zebra* (1763); Joseph Wright of Derby, *The Blacksmith’s Shop* (1771); J. M. W. Turner, *Dort or Dordrecht: The Dort packet-boat from Rotterdam becalmed* (1818) and *Staffa, Fingal’s Cave* (1831–1832); and John Constable, the cloud studies (ca. 1821–1825) and *Hadleigh Castle* (1828–1829). But these old favorites will be seen in new and exciting juxtapositions.



The main galleries on the beautifully top-lit fourth floor will carry the story of British art through the mid-nineteenth century. The presentation will continue in the galleries of the second floor with a display of art from the Victorian period to the present day,

combining further masterworks from the collection such as James McNeill Whistler's *Nocturne in Blue and Silver* (1872–1878), with important long-term loans such as Jacob Epstein's sculpture *Venus* (1914–1916), Lucian Freud's *Girl in a Dark Dress* (1951) and Francis Bacon's *Three Portrait Studies: Isabel Rawsthorne, Lucian Freud, and JH*, 1966 (1966).



The reinstallation of the collection will also include a complete reconfiguration of the Long Gallery on the fourth floor, restoring it to Kahn's original conception of a study gallery comprising an elegant sweep of seven bays. Over two hundred works will be presented in a rich floor-to-ceiling installation of paintings and sculpture. Arranged thematically and envisioned as a teaching space where works will be rotated regularly to accommodate faculty needs, the Long Gallery will lead to a brand-new collections seminar room. The addition of this much-needed object study room will allow faculty and students to request an up-close examination of paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings that are not currently on display.

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YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. Visit us online at britishart.yale.edu.



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