Yale Center for British Art will Reopen to the Public on May 11, 2016, Completing Interior Conservation of Louis I. Kahn’s Landmark Building and Reinstallation of a World-Renowned Collection

NEW HAVEN – The Yale Center for British Art, home to the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside the United Kingdom, will reopen its doors on Wednesday, May 11, 2016, following a closure to conserve its landmark building, designed by the architect Louis I. Kahn. The Center’s public galleries and Lecture Hall have been renewed and reconfigured, allowing the renowned collection of more than five centuries of British art to be experienced in the building as Kahn originally envisioned it, while also bringing internal systems, spaces, and amenities to state-of-the-art standards.

“This marks a milestone in our decade-long building conservation project, which began with a detailed investigation of every aspect of our remarkable building’s genesis and history. We are eager to share with the public the elegant spaces of this newly refreshed landmark structure,” said Director Amy Meyers.

In celebration of the reopening, the Center—which remains free and open to the public year-round—will host extended hours on Wednesday, May 11, and Thursday, May 12, offering special tours, including a behind-the-scenes look at the Center’s painting and paper conservation studios on opening day. On Saturday, May 14, the Center will host a daylong series of programs and activities to welcome the community, featuring gallery tours, musical and dance performances, refreshments, and other activities. Screenings of a brief documentary on the architecture of Kahn’s iconic building will be shown in the renovated Lecture Hall to provide visitors with a deeper context for the Center’s building conservation project. Once open, the Center will resume its rich program of ongoing events, including special tours of the Founder’s Room that offer unique insight into the extraordinary collections of Yale Center for British Art Founder Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929). Further details about the Center’s reopening plans will be announced in the coming weeks.

THE INSTALLATION
The reinstallation of the Yale Center for British Art’s collection will showcase the Center’s renewed public galleries, focusing on an exploration of “Britain in the World.” Featuring more than five hundred works from the Center’s holdings, largely the gift of Paul Mellon, the exhibition 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 reveal how frequently the story of art in Britain focuses on the narrative of international exchange. Returning to view will be many of the well-known treasures from the Paul Mellon Collection, by artists including Thomas...
Gainsborough, George Stubbs, J. M. W. Turner, John Constable, and Ben Nicholson. These will be augmented by gifts and acquisitions of works by artists such as Rachel Whiteread and Barbara Hepworth, as well as select loans including works by Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon. One of the notable changes to the Center’s fourth-floor space will be the return of the Long Gallery to the original conception of the space as a teaching and study gallery, as formulated by the Center’s founding director, Jules Prown, and as designed by Kahn. Here, more than two hundred works will be presented in a rich floor-to-ceiling installation of paintings and sculpture.

In tandem with this display, the Center also will present two special temporary exhibitions at its reopening—*Modernism and Memory: Rhoda Pritzker and the Art of Collecting*, highlighting a unique and highly personal collection of modern British art, as well as *Art in Focus: Relics of Old London*, a project curated by the Center’s student guides, which surveys a series of nineteenth-century photographs that capture London’s architectural past.

**THE BUILDING CONSERVATION**

Following more than a decade of research on the history of the design, construction, and renovation of the Yale Center for British Art’s building, the reopening this spring marks the completion of a three-phase renovation plan. In 2011, the Center published a groundbreaking conservation plan, *Louis I. Kahn and the Yale Center for British Art: A Conservation Plan*, by London-based architects Peter Inskip and Stephen Gee, in association with Constance Clement, the Center’s deputy director. The book chronicles the Center’s historic conservation project and proposes a series of policies for the building’s care and maintenance in the years ahead.

The first phase of work to be guided by this plan included the rehabilitation of the Center’s exterior Lower Court and extensive repairs of the adjacent Lecture Hall Lobby in 2010–2013. This was followed by two additional phases addressing the building’s interior spaces: The second phase, in 2013, focused on refurbishment of the department of Prints & Drawings and Rare Books & Manuscripts. Along with vitally increasing storage capacity for works on paper, behind-the-scenes renovations included the replacement of carpeting and wall coverings; the renewal of the finish on white oak storage cabinets; and the reconfiguration of offices to better accommodate the needs of staff. The third phase, begun in 2015, concentrated primarily on enhancing the Center’s public spaces, namely the galleries and Lecture Hall, while also addressing improvements related to life safety and accessibility, and extensive building-wide mechanical and electrical upgrades.

Architect George Knight, Principal of Knight Architecture LLC. (New Haven), along with Yale’s Office of Facilities and Turner Construction Company, led the renovation on behalf of the Center.

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ABOUT THE ARCHITECTURE
The Yale Center for British Art is designed by the internationally acclaimed American architect Louis I. Kahn (1901–1974). The Center first opened to the public in 1977, and is located in downtown New Haven, Connecticut, directly across the street from his first major commission, the Yale University Art Gallery (1953). The Center’s exterior of matte steel and reflective glass confers a monumental presence in downtown New Haven. The geometrical four-floor interior is designed around two courtyards and is comprised of a restrained palette of natural materials including travertine, white oak, and Belgian linen. Kahn succeeded in creating intimate galleries where one can view objects in diffused natural light. He wanted to maximize daylight and use artificial illumination only on dark days or in the evening. The building’s design, materials, and sky-lit rooms provide an environment for the works of art that is simple and dignified. In 2005 the Center received the prestigious Twenty-five Year Award of the American Institute of Architects, which each year honors a single architectural landmark that was completed within the previous twenty-five to thirty-five years and has withstood the test of time.

PRESS CONTACTS
Yale Center for British Art
Betsy Kim | +1 203 432 2853 | betsy.kim@yale.edu
Ronnie Rysz | +1 203 436 3429 | ronnie.rysz@yale.edu

POLSKIN ARTS & COMMUNICATIONS COUNSELORS
Meryl Feinstein: +1 212 715 1625 | meryl.feinstein@finnpartners.com