

## Wright time. Wright place.

The posters and billboards are appearing in London...

And "The Year of Wright", which features a major exhibition at the National Gallery in London from 7 November to 10 May, will soon be making Derby one of the most talked about cities in Britain.

Joseph Wright (1734-1797) is widely regarded as one of the finest artists of his age. Capable of illustrating the dramatic advances which were being made in the arts, science, philosophy, and religion in what was a golden era of enlightenment, his work is now all set to go on show at the right time, and in the right place.

The acquisition and exhibition of a new self-portrait in Derby created the spark which has led to this collaboration between The National Gallery in London and Derby Museums.

A tempting trailer, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Life On Paper*, shown in Derby earlier this year, has already proved to be a resounding success.

And while there are hopes that it might go on show again in Derby, before going out on loan to galleries nationwide, the main event [\*Wright of Derby: From the Shadows\*](#) is already being talked of as one of "the hottest tickets for Autumn".

It was 1765, when visitors to the Society of Artists in London were treated to a viewing of the first of his world-famous series of 'candlelight' paintings, in which the strong contrasts of light-and-shadow highlight the dramatic effects of his subjects. Caravaggio and Rembrandt had both already perfected the technique; but Wright was known by his contemporaries as the leading British artist in this style.

*From the Shadows* will be the first exhibition dedicated to Joseph Wright at the National Gallery, and the first exhibition to focus on his 'candlelight' series. The exhibition is organised in partnership with Derby Museums where it will travel in 2026.

It will focus on Joseph Wright's career between 1765 and 1773, during which time he made a series of candlelit scenes. On show will be a number of masterpieces from this period including 'Three Persons Viewing the Gladiator by Candlelight', 'A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery in which a lamp is put in place of the Sun' and 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump'. This marks the first time in 35 years that these works will be brought together.

'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump', meanwhile, is in The National Gallery's top ten most-asked-about paintings in its entire collection.

Seventeen artworks in the exhibition will be travelling from Derby Museums, which holds the world's largest collection of Wright's work.

Wright himself rarely left Derby - a place that deeply shaped his identity and artistic output - where he produced accurate portraits of the Midlands industrialists and entrepreneurs of the time. His painting of Sir Richard Arkwright, for example, which is on loan from a private collection and hangs in the Joseph Wright Gallery in Derby, is the one now faithfully reproduced in virtually every publication dealing with the Industrial Revolution.

It has all helped to shape the belief that there is no Wright without Derby, and that you cannot truly experience Joseph Wright without visiting Derby.

A birthplace memorial at 28 Iron Gate in Derby, an armillary sphere similar to the one featured in 'A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery', his tombstone in Derby Cathedral, and most importantly of all, Derby Museums featuring the unrivalled Joseph

Wright collection can be all found today within the city centre. (For more details, visit [www.visitderby.co.uk](http://www.visitderby.co.uk)).

*From The Shadows* runs to 10 May at the National Gallery, but the biggest 'coup' for Derby is that... "It's coming home"!

On 12 June 2026, *From The Shadows* will go on show at Derby Museum and Art Gallery, reuniting 'Bird in the Air Pump' and 'The Orrery' in Derby for the first time in 80 years, and giving all visitors the chance to see the same exhibition of work **for free**. It will then close on 1 November 2026.

By which time, of course, Wright of Derby will have been elevated to a position normally reserved for the likes of Constable and Turner.

*ENDS*

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